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India, France aim for stronger economic ties: French minister

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BUSINESS

ATF price hiked 1.45%, commercial LPG up ₹ 16.5

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PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen clinch singles titles

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Commit to dollar or face 100% tariffs: Trump warns BRICS

India says it is against de-dollarisation

WASHINGTON, 1 DEC

President-elect Donald Trump on Saturday warned BRICS countries against any move to replace the US dollar and has sought a commitment from the nine-member group that includes India, Russia, China and Brazil.

BRICS, formed in 2009, is the only major international group of which the US is not a part. Its other members are South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. Over the past few years, a few of its member countries, in particular Russia and China, are seeking an alternative to the US Dollar or create own BRICS currency.

Trump warned BRICS nations against such a move. "The idea that the BRICS Countries are trying to move away from the Dollar while we stand by and watch is OVER," the president-elect said in a post on Truth Social.

"We require a commitment from these Countries that they will neither create a new BRICS Currency, nor back any other Currency to replace the mighty US dollar or, they will face 100 per cent tariffs and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US Economy," Trump warned.

"They can go find another 'sucker!' There is no chance that the BRICS will replace the US dollar in International Trade, and any country that tries should wave goodbye to America," he said.

India, an important pillar of BRICS, has said it is against de-dollarisation.

"...ask you about de-dollarisation as a possibility for the world. At times India has expressed interest in alternative currency. It can serve as a reserve mechanism. I wonder how do you see that right now what you see as the role of the dollar and these discussions about your national policy? India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said. "I think you have us confused for someone else because we have never actively targeted the dollar. That's not part of either our economic policy or our political or our strategic policy. Some others may have," Jaishankar said. *—PTI*

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CYCLONE HITS SOUTH

After making landfall near Puducherry and Tamil Nadu, cyclone Fengal weakened on Sunday, but torrential downpour under its influence paralysed Pondi; People get drenched due to 'Fengal' effect at Mysuru Road, in Bengaluru. IMD has issued orange alert in Bengaluru till 3 December ***PHOTOS: PTI/MOHAMMED ASAD***

BJP: Devendra Fadnavis' name finalised for M'rashtra CM's post

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

The name of Devendra Fadnavis has been finalised as the new chief minister of Maharashtra, a senior BJP leader said on Sunday night.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, he told PTI that the BJP legislature party meeting will be held on either 2 or 3 December.

The oath-taking ceremony of the new Mahayuti government will take place on 5 December evening at the Azad Maidan in south Mumbai and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend it.

Fadnavis had served as chief minister twice- the second stint lasting for a few days. He was deputy CM in the outgoing Eknath Shinde-led government.

Maharashtra's caretaker Chief Minister Eknath Shinde headed to his native village Dare in Satara district on Friday, amid speculation that he was not happy with the way the new state government was shaping up. *—PTI*

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Devendra Fadnavis ***PHOTO: ANI***

BBMP collects record ₹ 4,284 cr property tax

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has set a new benchmark in property tax collection, surpassing Rs 4,284 crore by 30 November. This achievement marks the highest-ever collection in its history and brings BBMP closer to its ambitious target of Rs 5,200 crore for the financial year ending March 2025. In 2023, BBMP's tax collection stood at approximately Rs 3,800 crore, while in 2022, it was Rs 3,450 crore. With four months remaining in the financial year, BBMP officials are optimistic about meeting or even exceeding the Rs 5,200 crore target. ***—Salar News***

>>>More on Page 2

ICC: Jay Shah takes over as new chairman

DUBAI, 1 DEC

Indian cricket administrator Jay Shah on Sunday took charge as the chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) with an immediate goal of ending the impasse surrounding the Champions Trophy and a broader vision of making cricket a commercially viable Olympic sport. The 36-year-old Shah, who headlined the BCCI as its secretary for the last five years, is the fifth Indian and the youngest ever to head the global cricket body. Shah, the son of India's Home Minister Amit Shah, will have his task cut out as the ICC looks to find an acceptable solution to implement the 'Hybrid Model' for the Champions Trophy originally scheduled in Pakistan. ***—PTI***

>>>More on Page 8

A three-member judicial commission visits the Shahi Jama Masjid, in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

ASI seeks control of Sambhal mosque

SAMBHAL, 1 DEC

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has submitted its response in a court, seeking the control and management of the Mughal-era mosque, as it is a protected heritage structure. The court had allowed a survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal in November.

Lawyer Vishnu Sharma, who represented the ASI, said the agency submitted its counterargument in the court on Friday, stating that it faced resistance from the mosque's management committee and locals in conducting surveys of the site.

He said the ASI also highlighted an incident from 19 January, 2018, when an FIR was filed against the mosque's management committee for installing steel railings on the mosque's steps without authorisation.

ASI argued that the control and management of the monument, including the authority to make any structural modification, must remain with it. It said unauthorised changes to the mosque's structure by the management committee were unlawful and should be restricted. *—PTI*

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Seven Maoists killed in gunfight with police in Telangana

HYDERABAD, 1 DEC

Seven Maoists, including a key leader of the outlawed group with a Rs 20 lakh bounty on his head, were killed in an exchange of fire with the police in Mulugu district of Telangana on Sunday morning, police said.

Among those killed was Kursam Mangu alias Bhadru, a Telangana state committee member and the Yellandu-Narsampet area committee secretary of the banned CPI (Maoist), along with a woman cadre, they said, adding that six of the seven slain Maoists were natives of Chhattisgarh.

The exchange of fire took place during a combing operation in the Chalpaka forest area of Eturnagaram mandal, involving Greyhounds, an elite anti-Naxal force of Telangana Police, and the Maoists. The operation was ongoing at the time.

The armed CPI(Maoist) cadres began firing indiscriminately at the police personnel despite being asked to surrender. The police also returned fire in self-defence, he said.

After the encounter, police found seven dead bodies while the remaining ultras got away. *—PTI*

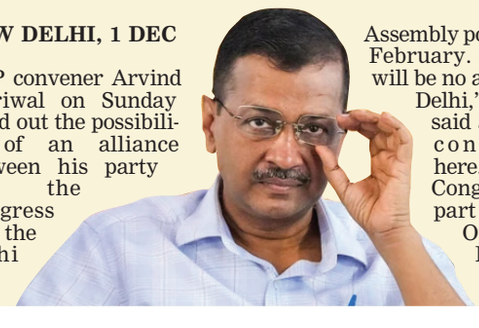
KEJRIWAL RULES OUT TIE-UP WITH CONG FOR DELHI POLLS

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday ruled out the possibility of an alliance between his party and the Congress for the Delhi Assembly polls due in February. "There will be no alliance in Delhi," Kejriwal said at a press conference here. AAP and Congress are part of the Opposition INDIA bloc and fought the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi together earlier this year.

Both parties drew a blank, with the BJP winning all seats. AAP and Congress failed to reach a seat-sharing agreement ahead of the Haryana Assembly polls in October despite several rounds of talks. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3



ANDHRA GOVT DISSOLVES WAQF BOARD

AMARAVATI, 1 DEC

The Andhra Pradesh government has dissolved the AP State Waqf Board to promote good governance, safeguard Waqf properties, and ensure the board operates efficiently, officials said.

The state government revoked a government order (GO) issued on 21 October, 2023, which had elected three members and nominated seven others to the 11-member Waqf Board.

"In the interest of maintaining good governance, protecting Waqf properties, and ensuring the smooth functioning of the Waqf Board, the government hereby withdraws GO MS No. 47 (which constituted the board) with immediate effect," said K Harshavardhan, secretary to the government.

The southern state also considered the observations made by the High Court in the writ petitions while arriving at this decision, GO added. *—PTI*

HONOURING LEGACY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah pays tribute to former CM late Kengal Hanumanthaiah on his 45th death anniversary at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Sunday. Family members of Kengal Hanumanthaiah were also present on the occasion ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

BY SEPT 2025

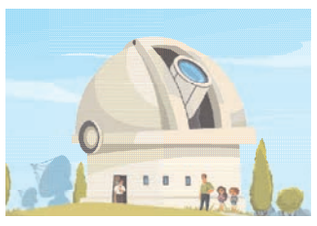
World's 1st tilted LED dome planetarium to open in Mysuru

MYSURU, 1 DEC

The world's first-ever tilted dome LED planetarium is taking shape in Mysuru and will offer visitors an immersive experience of the night sky once it opens in September 2025.

The Rs 91-crore project is being constructed by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIAp) and the University of Mysore at its Chamundi Hills campus.

"Unlike a conventional projector-based fulldome system widely used in planetaria, the LED dome system produces images using LED elements that emit light on an immense colour spectrum," IIAp Director Annapurni Subramanian told PTI on the sidelines of the India International Science Festival (IISF) here.



Subramanian said the planetarium will comprise a 15-metre diameter dome tilted at an angle of 15 degrees which will allow users to view the night sky right in front of them instead of sitting in reclining chairs and craning their necks.

RSA Cosmos was awarded the contract to build the LED dome planetarium by the IIAp and the installation will be carried out by Orbit Animate Pvt. Ltd., the Indian subsidiary of the French firm.

This project is financially supported by MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) funds of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Atomic Energy and Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, Government of India. *—PTI*

Indian bus attacked in B'desh: Tripura's Transport Minister

AGARTALA, 1 DEC

Tripura's Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury alleged that a bus on the way to Kolkata from Agartala was attacked in Bangladesh.

The incident happened on Bishwa Road in Bangladesh's Brahmanbaria district, he said.

"A Sahyamoli Paribahan bus on the way from Tripura to Kolkata was attacked in Bangladesh's Brahmanbaria Bishwa Road. The incident terrified Indian passengers on the bus. The bus was maintaining its lane when a truck intentionally hit it. At this point, an autorickshaw came in front of the bus, and the bus and the auto-rickshaw collided," Chowdhury said in a post on Facebook on Saturday, sharing photos of bus. *—PTI*

Ex-officials write to PM to halt Ajmer Dargah tensions

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

A group of former bureaucrats and diplomats has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and stop what they term "illegal and pernicious" activities undermining India's civilisational heritage. Their letter, dated 29 November follows a local court's order for a survey of Ajmer Sharif Dargah, a revered site associated with 12th-century Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

The group, which includes former Delhi lieutenant governor Najeeb Jung and ex-chief election commissioner SY Quraishi, criticises fringe organisations claiming to represent Hindu interests that demand archaeological surveys of mosques and dargahs to verify the historical presence of temples. They assert that such demands violate the Places of Worship Act and threaten India's pluralistic values.

PHOTO: PTI

The signatories express concern over recent communal tensions, noting similarities to the Partition's aftermath and an alarming trend of increasing violence and discrimination against minority communities, particularly Muslims. They describe a sequence of incidents escalating from harassment to lynchings, calls for boycotts of Muslim businesses. *—PTI*

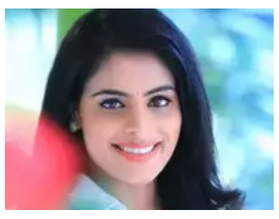


PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Kannada actress Shobitha Shivanna dies by suicide

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Kannada actress Shobitha Shivanna was found dead at an apartment in Telangana's Rangareddy district, on Sunday. The actress, who was well-known for her roles in popular Kannada TV serials, was discovered by her family after she did not respond to calls. Shobitha was involved in several serials, with her most famous work being Brahmagantu. Authorities are investigating the cause of her death, but no foul play has been suspected at this time. Tributes have poured in from fans and colleagues across the industry. She appeared in various movies such as 'Jackpot', 'Vandana', and TV serials like 'Gaalipata'. *—Agencies*

Cong convention in Hassan on 5 December: DKS

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday clarified that Congress convention would be held on 5 December in Hassan under the banner of the party. Speaking to reporters after a preparatory meeting at the KPCC office, he said, "Many leaders of the party have expressed the intention to hold the Congress party convention in Hassan. All the ministers and district in charge ministers are making necessary preparations. Many organisations and communities have supported this convention and welcome their support." "AICC leaders have directed us to organise a programme on protection of the Constitution and developments in the country," he added. *—Salar News*

ISRO to launch ESA's Proba-3 mission on 4 Dec

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

ISRO's trusted workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) will blast off from Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh on 4 December carrying ESA's Proba-3 mission, the Indian space agency said on Sunday. The European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 Mission is happening in collaboration with ISRO's commercial arm NewSpace India Limited (NSIL). "This mission will place ESA's PROBA-3 satellites (550kg) into a unique highly elliptical orbit, reinforcing PSLV's reliability for complex orbital deliveries," ISRO said in a post on 'X'. According to ISRO, the satellite will take off at 4.08 pm on Wednesday. The ESA said Proba-3 is the world's first precision formation flying mission. It will study the solar corona, the outermost and hottest layer of Sun's atmosphere. *—PTI*

BBMP collects record ₹4,284 crore property tax

BBMP aims to collect ₹5,200 cr target before finacial year end

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has set a new benchmark in property tax collection, surpassing Rs 4,284 crore by 30 November. This achievement marks the highest-ever collection in its history and brings BBMP closer to its ambitious target of Rs 5,200 crore for the financial year ending March 2025.

In 2023, BBMP's tax collection stood at approximately Rs 3,800 crore, while in 2022, it was Rs 3,450 crore.

Sharing the data with Salar News on Sunday, a BBMP official said this upward trajectory reflects the effectiveness of the civic body's efforts in increasing compliance and leveraging technology for tax collection.

"Frequent reminders through SMS, calls and emails, sealing down premises of tax defaulters and various other strict reforms contributed to the record collection," the official said.

In 2023, BBMP's tax collection stood at Rs 3,800 crore PHOTO: PTI

The detailed report shared by the official reveals that contributions from various zones have played a vital role in achieving this milestone. Mahadevapura Zone topped the chart with a whopping Rs 1,148.35 crore, demonstrating its position as the highest revenue contributor. East Zone followed with Rs 710.31 crore, and South Zone collected Rs 606.48 crore.

Bommanahalli Zone also made significant contributions, collecting Rs 418.78 crore.

The overall collection includes Rs 521.35 crore through offline channels and a substantial Rs 3,762.81 crore through online payments, highlighting the success of digital initiatives.

With four months remaining in the financial year, BBMP officials are optimistic about meeting or even exceeding the Rs 5,200 crore target. Continued focus on streamlining tax assessment, addressing defaulters, and encouraging timely payments is expected to boost collections further. *—Salar News*

ZONE WISE TAX COLLECTION

Central	₹36.36 cr
Bommanahalli	₹418.78 cr
Dasarahalli	₹136.2 cr
East	₹710.31 cr
Mahadevapura	₹1,148.35 cr
RR Nagar	₹335.72 cr
South	₹606.48 cr
West	₹483.67 cr
Yelahanka	₹408.29 cr
TOTAL: ₹4,284.16 CR	

*(From April till November)

SAYS BJP'S YATNAL

'Anti-Waqf march not against individuals'

BENGALURU/BELAGAVI, 1 DEC

Senior BJP leader Basanagouda Patil Yatnal on Sunday said his anti-Waqf march is not directed at any individual but is a fight for farmers, 'Sanatana Dharma', and Hindus.

MLA Yatnal, along with senior BJP leaders such as Ramesh Jarkiholi, Mahesh Kumathalli, Arvind Limbavali, and Madhu Bangarappa, launched a month-long 'anti-Waqf' march from Bidar in north Karnataka to Chamarajanagar in the southern part of the state.

The agitation, which began on 25 November, will continue until 25 December and is aimed at opposing eviction notices issued to some farmers and institutions by the Waqf Board, which claims rights over their land.

BJP leader, known for his strong criticism of former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, his son and BJP State president BY Vijayendra, and their 'dynastic politics,' clarified that he had no vested interests in the matter.

The firebrand BJP leader's remarks came amid criticism

Basanagouda Patil PHOTO: FB

from the Vijayendra camp, which demanded his expulsion from the party for alleged anti-party activities, as the state unit had not granted permission for the march.

Yatnal rejected the claim that his agitation was "politically motivated" and asked, "With whom do I have an adjustment? The ruling Congress shut down my sugar factory worth Rs 850 crore in the most backward region of Karnataka."

He also refuted allegations of being a 'Congress agent,' saying he had never approached Chief Minister Siddaramaiah or Deputy CM D K Shivakumar.

Yatnal also announced that the public meeting in Davangere would be a grand show of strength and urged people to come in large numbers. *—PTI*

BJP MLA Munirathna booked over murder plot

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

A new case has been filed against BJP MLA Munirathna and six others, alleging a plot to murder a former JD(S) contractor of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and her husband. The charges extend to voyeurism and perpetrating acts that outraged the modesty of a woman.

The First Information Report (FIR) was registered by Bengaluru police on Saturday. Those named in the FIR alongside Munirathna include Sunandamma, Venkatesh, Laxmamma, Jayamma, Latha, and several others. Munirathna was previously taken into custody on September 14 for allegedly threatening a BBMP contractor, with assistance from Kolar police while he was en route to Andhra Pradesh.

The case is extensive, encompassing serious offences under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). These include Sections 354A (sexual harassment), 354C (voyeurism), 376 (rape), 506 (criminal intimidation), and multiple others related to extortion and criminal assembly.

Munirathna PHOTO: X

. The complaints originated from a BBMP contractor who alleged that the MLA demanded a commission of approximately Rs 20 lakh related to a contract. In response to a counter-offer of Rs 1 lakh, Munirathna allegedly insisted on the full amount. *—ANI*

TOGETHER IN SPIRIT

Heads of ISKCON and devotees protest against atrocities on Hindus and arrest of monk Chinmaya Krishnadas Brahmachari and others in Bangladesh, in Bengaluru on Sunday. ISKCON Bengaluru President Madhu Pandit Dasa urged Centre to work with neighbouring countries to protect rights of minorities PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

BJP MLC: Focus on development, not internal divisions

MYSURU, 1 DEC

Taking strong objections to internal bickerings among state BJP leaders, MLC H Vishwanath on Sunday said that people will not tolerate such developments in the party. He urged state BJP leaders, including union ministers, to focus on the State's development and secure funds from the centre rather than indulge in factionalism.

Vishwanath noted that while Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated various development projects, many BJP leaders, except for Railway Minister V Somanna, have limited their visits to the State. He criticised the State government, particularly Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, for failing to address encroachments on Waqf properties by influential Muslims and urged for a focus on constructive governance. *—Salar News*

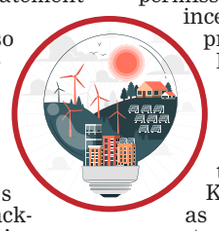
Hero Future Energies signs MoU to invest ₹11,000 crore in State

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Hero Future Energies Private Limited (HFEPL) has entered into an agreement with the Government of Karnataka to set up projects in Renewable Energy, Green Hydrogen, and its derivatives in the state, with an investment of Rs 11,000 crore, State Minister MB Patil said on Sunday.

The Memorandum of Understanding was formalised during the London Roadshows, Patil, who oversees the large and medium industries and infrastructure portfolio, said in a statement.

HFEPL, part of the Hero Group, was founded in 2012 by Rahul Munjal, the company's chairman and managing director. Hero Group's flagship company, Hero MotoCorp, is one of the largest two-wheeler manufacturers in the world, the statement added.



The statement also highlighted that marquee investors such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group and Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR) are backing HFEPL. "HFEPL's proposed projects will involve a total investment of Rs 11,000 crore over two to three years, starting in 2025-26. These initiatives are expected to generate nearly 3,000 jobs in Karnataka," Patil said.

The Minister further stated that the State government would facilitate the necessary permissions, approvals, and incentives to ensure the projects are established on time under the state's prevailing policies and regulations.

"This collaboration reinforces Karnataka's position as a preferred investment destination and underscores the state's leadership in driving green energy solutions and sustainable industrial development," Patil added. *—PTI*

Activists condemn harassment of Nadeem Khan

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Civil rights organisations, including the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Bahutva Karnataka, and Eddelu Karnataka, have strongly condemned the Delhi Police's actions against human rights activist Nadeem Khan. The groups have called for the immediate withdrawal of what they termed a 'malicious FIR' filed against Khan, the National General Secretary of the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR). The oganisations criticised the Delhi Police for violating legal procedures and intimidating Khan and his family. Around 5pm on 30 November, four police officers from Delhi allegedly attempted to detain Khan in Bengaluru without a warrant, coercing him to travel to Delhi under 'informal custody', they said. The basis of this FIR is that Khan was involved in putting up an exhibition highlighting recent incidents of hate crimes and hate speeches in India. They demanded the withdrawal of the FIR and an investigation into the actions of the Delhi Police. *—Salar News*

Vokkaliga associations protest FIR against seer in Mysuru

MYSURU, 1 DEC

On Sunday, members of various Vokkaliga associations in Mysuru held a protest demanding the withdrawal of an FIR withing 2 days filed against Chandrashekharantha Swamiji, the head of Vishwavokkaligara Mahasamsthan Mutt, over his remarks about removing voting rights for Muslims.

Akhila Karnataka Vokkaligara Sangha president, said the seer apologised, describing them it as a slip of the tongue. *—Salar News*

The blast took place at 11.30am in DJ Halli on Saturday PHOTO: SALAR

Cylinder explosion: 4 of family suffer burn injuries

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Four members of a family including two children suffered burn injuries after an LPG cylinder exploded at their house in DJ Halli police station limits.

The police said that the incident took place around 11:30am at the house near Anand theatre on Saturday after a suspected gas leak due to a damaged regulator. A case was registered on Sunday regarding the incident.

The injured, Nazir, his wife Kulsum and two children, were taken to Ambedkar hospital soon after the incident. On Sunday they were shifted to Victoria hospital for further treatment.

It was learnt that Nazir is a pani puri vendor and had been residing in the house with his family for the past two years.

Following inspection on Sunday, a policeman said that the family had been using an expired regulator for the gas cylinder which should have been replaced in 2016.

As per the consumer guidance, regulators for LPG cylinders should be inspected often for damages and must be replaced no more than 10 years after the date of manufacture."Preliminary inspection suggests that the explosion was due to a gas leak. Due to the impact, furniture and several items in the house were destroyed. Four members including two children are treated at Victoria hospital for burn injuries. They are out of danger now," he said. *—Salar News*

FIFTH EXTENSION

HSRP deadline extended to 31 Dec

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Karnataka government has extended the deadline for vehicle owners to install High-Security Registration Number Plates (HSRP) to 31 December. This marks the fifth extension, highlighting ongoing challenges in the implementation of the initiative. Previously the government had set 30 November as the deadline.

Transport department officials cited several reasons for the delay, including logistical issues and public hesitancy towards the new registration

PHOTO: X

plates. A significant factor behind the lack of adoption appears to be limited awareness among vehicle owners about the benefits and necessity of HSRPs.

"We are facing resistance due to misinformation and inadequate awareness campaigns. Many vehicle owners remain unaware of the advantages, such as enhanced security against theft and compliance with national regulations," a senior transport official said. The government has stressed that HSRPs are mandatory for all vehicles registered before April 2019, while those registered post this date already have them fitted. Officials have urged vehicle owners to comply within the new deadline.Concerns remain whether this extension will finally push vehicle owners to meet the requirements. *—Salar News*

CRIME BEAT

CITY MAN HELD FOR CHEATING WOMAN ON PRETEXT OF MARRIAGE

BENGALURU, 1 DEC

Nelamangala police arrested a man for allegedly exploiting a woman on the pretext of marriage. The action was taken based on a complaint filed by a woman, resident of Nelamangala. The accused, Srikanth, is a resident of Hosapalya near Tavarekere, the police said. As per the complaint, the victim met the accused through the social media platfor Instagram in 2023 following which both developed intimacy. It is alleged that during this time, the accused forced the victim to undergo an abortion saying that he is not yet financially stable to raise a child. The accused began ignoring her and later ill-treated, harassed and refused to marry her, the victim alleged. *—Salar News*

FOOD DELIVERY EXECUTIVE MOWED DOWN BY TRUCK IN BENGALURU

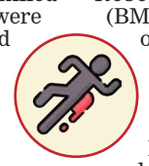
BENGALURU, 1 DEC

A food delivery executive died after he suffered severe injuries in a road accident near Begur village junction, according to traffic police said on Sunday. The police on Sunday said that the 45-year-old deceased, Hariprasad, was a resident of Bannerghatta Road and the incident took place around 9.45pm on Saturday when a speeding concrete mixer truck, driving on the wrong side, crashed into his two-wheeler. Following the accident, Hariprasad was taken to a nearby hospital where he died during the wee hours of Sunday, the police added. Following a spot inspection, the Hulimavu traffic police have registered a case against the truck driver and have taken up further probe. *—Salar News*

3 PEOPLE, INCLUDING 2 DOCTORS, KILLED IN BALLARI ROAD ACCIDENT

BALLARI, 1 DEC

Three people, including two doctors, were killed when the car they were travelling in crashed into a tree in the district, which borders Andhra Pradesh, on Sunday morning, police said. A surgical oncologist and an ophthalmologist from Ballari were among the three persons who died. Another occupant of the car was injured, they said. The deceased doctors were associated with the Ballari Medical College and Research Centre (BMCRC). The incident occurred when they were returning to Ballari via Anantapur in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, after concluding their Bangkok trip. Meanwhile, BMCRC Director Gangadhar Gowda and the staff have expressed grief over the deaths. *—PTI*



Senior lawyer Dave breaks down over communalism

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Senior Advocate in the Supreme Court of India and former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Dushyant Dave broke down while sharing his anguish over the increasing communalisation in the country during journalist Karan Thapar's interview on Sunday. Expressing his concerns about the impact of communal disharmony on minorities, he said , "I have sleepless nights, I am worried. If it is impacting me, how much is it impacting those belonging to minority communities". He said by permitting surveys of mosques former chief justice DY Chandrachud has done a great disservice to the Constitution and to the nation. He further alleged that Chandrachud is playing in the hands of BJP. He further said it was proven by the aarti the Chandrachud performed in the company of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and secondly his claim that Ayodhya verdict was revealed to him by God. *—Agencies*

Farmers to lead 1st group of protesters to Delhi on 6 Dec

CHANDIGARH, 1 DEC

Farmer leader from Punjab Sarwan Singh Pandher on Sunday said a group of farmers, led by their leaders, will march towards Delhi on foot on 6 December even as he lashed out at the Centre for not holding any talks with the protesting farmers for resolving their issues, including a legal guarantee on the MSP. Farmers, led by Samyukta Kisan Morcha and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, have been camping at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since 13 February. They plan to march towards New Delhi from Shambhu, with the first "jatha" led by Satnam Singh Pannu, Surinder Singh Chautala, Surjit Singh Phul, and Baljinder Singh. *—PTI*

5 Bangladesh infiltrators sent back from Assam

GUWAHATI, 1 DEC

Five Bangladeshi infiltrators were apprehended by Assam Police and sent back to the neighbouring country, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday. He did not mention the bordering district where they were arrested. "5 more illegal infiltrators apprehended near the international border! Maintaining their high state of alert, @assampolice nabbed 5 illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators and pushed them across," Sarma said on X. The infiltrators trying to cross the border without valid documents have been identified as Md Noor Islam, Md Imran, Yasmin Akhtar, Ishmo Tara Akhtar and Md Babul Hussain, the chief minister added. Over 160 infiltrators have been apprehended and sent back since turmoil in Bangladesh. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

JK HC upholds migrant status for married KP women

JAMMU, 1 DEC

The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh has upheld a Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) ruling affirming that Kashmiri Pandit women retain their migrant status even after marrying non-migrants. The court stressed that discriminating against women based on marital status contravenes principles of justice, particularly given the circumstances surrounding their migration. It noted that many migrant women may not find spouses within their community due to historical migrations. The court dismissed appeals from the Union Territory seeking to overturn the CAT ruling, describing it as "just and proper". *—PTI*

Will back BJP's CM face, says Shinde

He rules out differences among Mahayuti allies

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

Maharashtra outgoing CM Eknath Shinde addresses a press conference in Satara, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Maharashtra's outgoing Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday said the BJP will decide on the new CM and assured his full support while ruling out differences among Mahayuti allies over the government formation.

Amid speculations that Shinde's son Shrikant Shinde might get the deputy CM's post and Shiv Sena is keen on the Home portfolio, Shinde said the Mahayuti allies-BJP, NCP, and Shiv Sena-will decide the government formation through consensus.

Notably, more than a week after the Mahayuti clinched a massive victory in Maharashtra polls with the BJP emerging as the single largest party with 132 seats, the new government is yet to be sworn in.

Interestingly, the BJP legislature party meeting to elect the leader, who will be the party's chief ministerial pick, is yet to be held, even though Shiv Sena and NCP allies have elected their respective leaders.

The BJP has announced that the oath-taking ceremony of the new Mahayuti government will take place on 5 December evening at the Azad Maidan in south Mumbai and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend it.

According to BJP sources, Devendra Fadnavis, who has been chief minister twice and was deputy CM in the last Eknath Shinde-led government, is the front-runner for the CM's post.

Shinde had left for his native village in Satara district on Friday amid speculation that he was not happy with the way the new government was shaping up.Talking to reporters in his village on Sunday before leaving for Mumbai, Shinde said, "I have already said the decision on CM's post taken by the BJP leadership will be acceptable to me and Shiv Sena and will have my full backing".

Meanwhile, Shinde, who took ill at his native village , is recovering and will return to Mumbai on Sunday evening, an associate said.— *PTI*

Govt formation delay an insult: Aaditya

He asked why Prez rule wasn't enforced in state

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

Shivsena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray along with Sena (UBT) leaders in Mumbai, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray on Sunday claimed the Mahayuti's inability to decide on a chief minister and form government more than a week after the announcement of assembly poll results was an "insult" to Maharashtra.

In a post on X, Thackeray also asked why President's rule has not yet been enforced in the state.

Targeting BJP, which is the largest constituent of the Mahayuti, Thackeray claimed that to declare the swearing-in date unilaterally without even staking claim to form government is "pure anarchy".

The Mahayuti alliance of the BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP retained power with a landslide victory in the assembly elections, the results of which were announced on 23 November.

Hitting out at the Mahayuti, Thackeray in a post on X said, "To not be able to decide on a chief minister, and form government, for more than a week after result day, is not just an insult to Maharashtra (for taking our state so lightly) but also to the assistance provided by their dearest Election Commission," Thackeray said.

It seems that rules only apply to the opposition parties, and not for some "special ones", he said.

"To declare the swearing in date, unilaterally, without even staking claim to form government and show numbers to the Hon'ble Governor, is pure anarchy," he claimed.

"And in all this, the caretaker cm is on a mini vacation, as per the phase of the moon, as we've regularly observed earlier too," Thackeray said. In the meanwhile, Maharashtra seems like no priority for those who could form government. They're enjoying their Delhi trips, he said sarcastically.

"Presidential rule? Shouldn't it have been in place by now? Wouldn't it have been, had the opposition had the numbers, with a decision pending?" asked Aaditya. *—PTI*

Waqf panel seeks data from 6 states

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

- Panel has decided to get an update on the points made by the Sachar committee on the Waqf properties allegedly in unauthorised occupation of state

The parliamentary committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill has sought details from six state governments about the veracity and updated details of Waqf properties which the Sachar committee claimed to be in their unauthorised occupation, sources said.

The parliamentary committee, whose tenure has been extended by Lok Sabha till the last day of the next Budget Session, has also sought from the states details of the properties claimed by Waqf boards exercising Section 40 of the Waqf Act.

Section 40, an amendment effected during the Congress-led UPA government's tenure in 2013, is one of the most hotly contested features of the existing law, as it gave Waqf boards the power to decide if any property belongs to the Waqf or not. The proposed law, which has faced flack from opposition parties and various Muslim groups for its alleged attempts to interfere in religious matters, has sought to curb this power, while making a slew of other changes in the existing Act. The sources said the parliamentary panel has decided to get an update on the points made by the Sachar committee on the Waqf properties that are allegedly in unauthorised occupation of state governments or their official agencies. The Sachar committee was informed by various state Waqf boards during 2005–06.

Panel has noted that there were 316 such properties in Delhi, 60 in Rajasthan, 42 in Karnataka, 53 in Madhya Pradesh, 60 in Uttar Pradesh and 53 in Odisha.

It has sought updates from all these six states, sources said, adding that the panel has got information from several other states. *—PTI*

'3RD ATTACK IN 35 DAYS'

Raised issues, got attacked: Kejri

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Aam Aadmi Party Convener Arvind Kejriwal with Delhi CM Atishi during 'Padayatra' in Kalkaji, on Sunday, in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

AAP National convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday targeted BJP-led central government over alleged inaction on law and order issues here, claiming that instead of taking action against criminals, an attack was orchestrated on him during his 30 November padyatra in the city.

The BJP is yet to respond to the allegations.

Speaking at a press conference, Kejriwal said, "The liquid thrown on me was harmless, but it could have been dangerous. This is the third attack on me in the last 35 days."

The former chief minister also accused Union Home Minister Amit Shah of sending the message that complainants, rather than offenders, will face arrest.

Criticising the arrest of AAP MLA Naresh Balyan, Kejirwal claimed that it sent a message to the people of Delhi and the city's gangsters that those who raise their voices against crimes would face jail while the gangsters themselves would be protected.

"Instead of taking action against the criminals, Amit Shah and the BJP have attacked me and arrested my MLA," Kejriwal said, stressing that his criticisms were about the worsening security situation in Delhi, not political gamesmanship.

The AAP leader also questioned how the people of Delhi could rely on the central government for their safety when their concerns were being dismissed.

"After all, to whom will the people of Delhi go for their safety? Will they be safe by arresting me and attacking my MLA," Kejriwal asked, urging Shah to take responsibility for addressing the city's crime crisis. *—PTI*

Will ban beef in Assam if Cong asks, says CM

GUWAHATI, 1 DEC

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said he was ready to ban beef in Assam if state Congress chief Bupen Kumar Borah writes to him, seeking such a prohibition.

Responding to the allegation that BJP distributed beef to win the Muslim-dominated Samaguri, Sarma said, "Samaguri was with Congress for 25 years. Congress losing a constituency like Samaguri by 27,000 votes (sic) is the biggest shame in its history. It is Congress's defeat more than BJP's win," he said on Saturday. "But amidst sadness, Rakibul Hussain said one good thing...He said that it was wrong for BJP to win elections by offering beef to voters...I want to tell Rakibul Hussain that beef should be banned as he himself said it is wrong. He only needs to give me in writing that neither BJP nor Congress should speak about beef, it should be banned in Assam... I will write to Bhupen Borah and ask him if he also advocates for banning beef...I will ban beef completely in the next assembly (accordingly)," he said. *—PTI*

We fight for spirit of our nation: Priyanka

WAYANAD, 1 DEC

Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi during a rally at Mananthavady, in Wayanad district, Kerala, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday launched a scathing attack against the Centre, saying that today the fight is against the force that is weakening the rights of the people and handing over them to a few "businessmen friends".

Addressing a meeting in Mananthavady, she said, "We are fighting against a force that is doing everything in its power to destroy the institutions upon which our country was built...Today we are fighting for the spirit of our nation, for the soul of India."

Priyanka said the fight was for the power and resources of this country to belong rightfully to its people.

"The symbol of true values that India stands for lies here in Wayanad. I want each one of you to know that you are my responsibility," she added. *—PTI*

Tipu a complex figure in history: EAM

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Jaishankar *PHOTO: PTI*

History is "complicated" and the politics of the day often indulges in "cherry-picking facts", and to a considerable extent, that has happened in Tipu Sultan's case, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.He said that he was a "very complex figure in history

He said at the launch of historian Vikram Sampath's book Tipu Sultan: The Saga of Mysore Interregnum 1761–1799 that there are some basic questions that "confront us all" today, as to how much of "our past has been airbrushed" and how "facts are tailored for regime convenience".

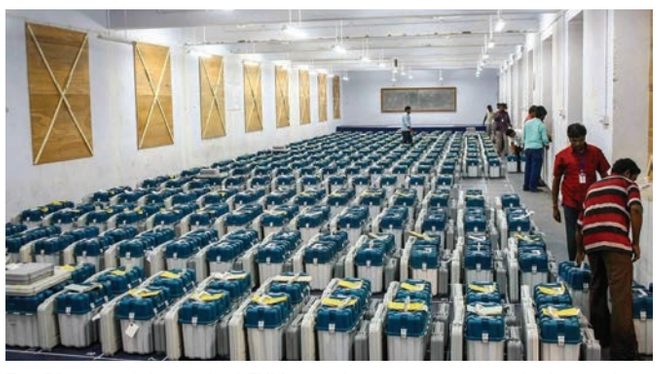
The minister said, "In the past decade, the changes in our political dispensation have encouraged the emergence of alternative perspectives and balanced accounts. We are no longer prisoners of a vote bank, nor is it politically incorrect to bring out inconvenient truths. There are many more subjects on which the same degree of objectivity is needed."

"On one hand, he has a reputation as a key figure who resisted the imposition of British colonial control over India. Meanwhile, it is a fact that his defeat and death can be considered a turning point when it came to the fate of peninsular India. At the same time, he evokes strong adverse sentiments, even today, in many regions, by some in Mysore itself, in Coorg and Malabar," he said. *—PTI*

POST-POLLS MAYHEM

EC files plaint over EVM hacking claim

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC



The EC has maintained that EVMs are standalone machines that cannot be connected to any network, including WiFi or Bluetooth *PHOTO: PTI*

Mumbai Cyber Police has lodged an FIR against a man who claimed he could hack EVMs by isolating machine frequency, Election Commission (EC) officials said.

The complaint in the matter was lodged by the Maharashtra chief electoral officer (CEO), alleging that the claims made by the accused, Syed Shuja, were false, baseless and unsubstantiated, they said.

The EC action came after some social media users shared a video in which a man is heard claiming that he could hack and tamper with electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the Maharashtra elections by isolating the machine's frequency.

EC officials here identified the man as Syed Shuja.

In 2019, the EC ordered filing of an FIR against Shuja for making similar claims.

"In a similar incident involving false claims, an FIR was lodged on the direction of the Election Commission against the same person in 2019 in Delhi who is hiding in some another country," the office of the Maharashtra CEO said in a post on X.

Delhi and Mumbai police are actively investigating the case and taking necessary steps to identify and apprehend anyone in India who is in contact with "such individuals" or complicit in these "malicious activities", an EC official said.

Such actions are a serious offence and no one involved will be spared, the official said.

The EC has maintained that EVMs are standalone machines that cannot be connected to any network, including WiFi or Bluetooth.

It has also stressed that EVMs are completely tamper-proof.

The Supreme Court has reposed its faith in EVMs on multiple occasions. *—PTI*

RSS Chief bats for total fertility rate of 'at least 3'

NAGPUR, 1 DEC

Mohan Bhagwat *PHOTO: PTI*

Expressing concern over declining population growth, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said the total fertility rate in India should be at least 3, well above the fertility rate of 2.1 per cent that is considered as the population replacement rate.

Speaking at the 'Kathale Kul (clan) Sammelan' in Nagpur, Bhagwat also highlighted the vital role of families, and warned that according to population science, if a society's total fertility rate dips below 2.1, it could face extinction.

"A declining population is a serious concern. Demographic studies suggest that when a society's total fertility rate falls below 2.1, it risks facing extinction. This decline does not necessarily require external threats; a society can gradually fade away on its own," Bhagwat said.

"Many languages and cultures have already disappeared due to this issue. Our country's population policy, clearly says that the total fertility rate should not be below 2.1. Now when we say 2.1, it is not feasible to have children in fraction. So when we say 2.1, this means it should be more, at least three. The (population) science says so," Bhagwat said. *—PTI*

UP teen dies of heart attack during school event

ALIGARH, 1 DEC

A tragic incident occurred in Uttar Pradesh when a teenager, while practicing for a school running event, collapsed and died due to a heart attack. The 17-year-old boy had been undergoing regular physical activity in preparation for the event when he suddenly fell unconscious. Despite efforts to revive him, the teenager was declared dead. Authorities are investigating the cause, and the incident has raised concerns about the potential health risks linked to strenuous physical activity in young individuals. The family and community are mourning the untimely loss. *—Agencies*

Tunnel collapse in Kota: 1 dead, 2 injured

KOTA, 1 DEC

A worker died and two other people were injured when a section of an under-construction tunnel collapsed in Kota district of Rajasthan, police said on Sunday. Superintendent of Police, Kota Rural, Sujit Shankar said the tunnel is part of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. A portion of it collapsed on Saturday night in the Modak area of Ramganj Mandi, he added. The workers who got trapped under the debris were rescued and rushed to a hospital, where Shamsher Singh, 33, was pronounced dead. The injured are undergoing treatment, Shankar said. Police and National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) officials reached the spot after the incident. *—PTI*

Massive fire erupts near Kochi rly stn; no casualties

KOCHI, 1 DEC

A major fire broke out at a private godown near the Ernakulam Junction Railway Station early Sunday, causing panic among the public. No casualties were reported though, authorities said. According to the Fire and Rescue Services, the blaze erupted around 1 am at a scrap godown near the Ernakulam South Railway Overbridge. Firefighters battled the flames for nearly five hours before bringing them under control. The intensity of the fire was exacerbated by LPG cylinders stored inside the godown exploding, officials said. Despite the challenges, fire and rescue personnel saved nine migrant workers trapped inside the godown. People living in nearby lodges and houses were evacuated as a precautionary measure, officials said. Train services between Ernakulam South Railway Station and Alappuzha, resumed after a two-hour disruption. *—PTI*

Cyclone Fengal hits Pondi with 30-year-high rainfall

Normal life crippled; Army, NDRF come to people's rescue

NDRF personnel and Indian Army evacuate residents from a flooded area in the aftermath of Cyclone Fengal, in Puducherry, on Sunday **PHOTOS: PTI**

PUDUCHERRY, 1 DEC

Normal life was crippled in Puducherry on Sunday due to heavy rains that lashed the union territory in the wake of Cyclone Fengal, which crossed the coast on 30 November night.

According to India Meteorological Department, Puducherry recorded 46 cm rainfall during the last 24 hours ending on Sunday.

Cyclone Fengal triggered heavy rainfall leading to inundation of all residential areas on the outskirts Of boulevard limits. Trees were uprooted at various places under the impact of the cyclonic storm. Many housing colonies were waterlogged and residents could not step out of the dwellings for hours together. Two-wheelers and cars parked on roads partially submerged in rainwater that entered several houses here, residents said.

All shops and business establishments remained closed and the government set up relief centers to accommodate people evacuated from low-lying areas.

A fisherman tries to retrieve his fishing nets near Marina Beach in the aftermath of Cyclone Fengal, in Chennai **PHOTO: PTI**

Transport services were hit and voluntary organisations like Pondicherry Heritage Round Table 167 volunteered to supplement the efforts of the government to supply food packets to people staying in relief camps.

Puducherry witnesses highest rainfall in 30 years

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy on Sunday said that Puducherry received 50 centimetres of rainfall overnight that has led to flooding in the city.

Rescue teams are working to evacuate stranded people, he said.

"Puducherry has received 50 cm of rainfall, resulting in severe flooding. I am currently inspecting the flood-affected areas. Rescue teams are working tirelessly to evacuate those stranded in the floodwaters," Chief Minister N Rangasamy told ANI.

Cyclone Fengal brought extremely heavy rainfall to Puducherry, with the Union Territory recording 48.4 centimetres of rain over 24 hours till 8:30 AM on 1 December. This marked the highest 24-hour cumulative rainfall in the last 30 years between years 1995 to 2024.

Earlier, Indian Army troops from the Chennai Garrison Battalion, operating under the Dakshin Bharat Area, were mobilised in the early hours of Sunday to assist in rescue operations in flood-affected areas of Puducherry.

The efforts made by the Indian Army during its rescue operations started at 6:15 am, with over 100 individuals being evacuated in the first two hours. *—PTI*

MOSQUE ROW

A three-member judicial commission visits the Shahi Jama Masjid, in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Judicial panel inspects Sambhal areas hit by violence

SAMBHAL, 1 DEC

Amid tight security, members of a judicial commission on Sunday visited the Shahi Jama Masjid here and other areas which witnessed violence over a court-ordered survey of the Mughal-era mosque.

Panel head retired Allahabad High Court judge Devendra Kumar Arora and retired IPS officer Arvind Kumar Jain were the two members of the three-member Commission which visited the areas that witnessed violence on 24 November.

The panel's third member, ex-IAS officer Amit Mohan Prasad, was not present during Sunday's visit.

The Commission members, however, did not respond to any media queries during the visit in the morning hours. They were accompanied by Moradabad Divisional Commissioner Aunjaneya Kumar Singh, DIG Muniraj G along with the Sambhal District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya and Superintendent of Police Krishan Kumar.

Later, speaking to reporters, the Moradabad Divisional Commissioner said, "Today, the chairperson of the inquiry commission and one other member visited the site. Their primary purpose was to inspect the location. They visited the areas where the disturbance occurred, examined the site and the structure, and spoke to some of the people present there.

The team will visit again, and a complete schedule for the team's visit will be announced. They are certain to return."

Mosque's secretary Masood Farooqui said, "The team did not ask us anything. They mentioned that they were only here to see the Jama Masjid and visited the site of the incident. They said they would take statements later." *—PTI*

India, France aim for stronger economic ties: French minister

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Following their strengthened defence collaboration, India and France are now aiming to enhance their economic and trade relations, particularly in areas such as clean energy, advanced technologies, and aviation. French Foreign Trade Minister Sophie Primas, wrapping up her three-day visit to India, expressed optimism for further negotiations between India and the European Union (EU) concerning a mutually beneficial free trade agreement that could boost bilateral economic engagement.

Negotiations for the ambitious trade deal resumed in June 2022 after an eight-year hiatus but have faced delays over various issues, including the EU's stance on a carbon tax. "We remain committed to reaching a trade deal that has ambitious sustainable development goals," Primas told.

Union minister Piyush Goyal welcomes French foreign trade minister Sophie Primas **PHOTO: PTI**

She highlighted the significant opportunities for French investment in India's burgeoning economy, particularly in aeronautics, sustainable development, and emerging technologies. Over the past five years, bilateral trade has stabilised between USD 11-13 billion, yet both parties recognize untapped commercial potential.

Primas encouraged Indian investors to leverage the France-India 2047 partnership introduced last year. France currently ranks as the 11th largest foreign investor in India, with over 1,000 French companies and cumulative investments of USD 10.84 billion since 2000. *—PTI*

AIR REMAINS TOXIC

Delhi's air chokes with 'very poor' AQI for 8th day

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The national capital continued to grapple with toxic air as its air quality remained in the "very poor" category for the eighth consecutive day on Sunday.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 329 at 9 am, a slight dip from Saturday's 24-hour average of 346, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Out of the 38 monitoring stations across the city, 23 stations recorded "very poor" AQI, according to the Sameer app, which provides hourly data.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

Rashtrapati Bhavan engulfed in a layer of smog, in New Delhi, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Meanwhile, the minimum temperature was logged at 11 degrees Celsius, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

At 8.30 am, the humidity level was recorded at 93 per cent, with the weather department forecasting a mainly clear sky for the morning.

The maximum temperature is expected to hover around 27 degrees Celsius, the department said. *—PTI*

NAGALAND MARKS 62ND STATEHOOD DAY

KOHIMA, 1 DEC

On the occasion of Nagaland's 62nd Statehood Day, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio emphasised the state's commitment to the principle of "Peace for development and development for peace." Speaking at the celebrations, Rio highlighted the importance of unity, inclusivity, and youth empowerment in achieving a prosperous future.

Reflecting on the words of former President S Radhakrishnan, he called for collective efforts to combat hatred and violence, urging citizens to work together for happiness and growth. Rio acknowledged the ongoing Naga political issue while reaffirming the government's dedication to peace and inclusivity, particularly in response to the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation's demands. *—PTI*

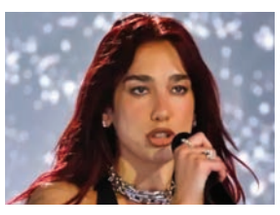


PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Dua Lipa dazzles Mumbai concert with SRK mash-up

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Pop star Dua Lipa surprised the audience at her Mumbai concert by performing a mash-up of her chartbuster "Levitating" and "Wo Ladki Jo", a song from the 1999 Bollywood film "Baadshah" fronted by Shah Rukh Khan. Dua, also known for tracks like "Illusion", "Dance The Night", "Houdini" and "One Kiss", took the stage on Saturday as part of the second edition of the Zomato Feeding India Concert. According to videos circulating on social media, the singer can be seen grooving to the fusion of the two songs, which went viral on social media a few years ago owing to their similar beat pattern. Shah Rukh's daughter, actor Suhana Khan also shared a reel of the singer's Saturday night performance on her Instagram Story with a series of emojis. This was her second performance in India after a 2019 concert at the OnePlus Music Festival in Navi Mumbai. At the time, the 29-year-old also met Shah Rukh. *—PTI*

TTD ISSUES WARNING ON HATE SPEECHES

TIRUPATI, 1 DEC

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, custodian of Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple, has banned political and hate speeches at Tirumala.

The decision comes in response to recent incidents where individuals including political leaders made political or inflammatory statements before the media near the temple premises after Darshan, disrupting the spiritual peace, it said in a social media post on Saturday.

Urging all visitors to respect the decision, the TTD warned of legal action against violators.

The board emphasises its commitment to preserving Tirumala's divine and serene environment.

LV Subrahmanyam, former Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh, told PTI that the rule has been in place long time and there were instances where violators were pulled up. *—PTI*

ED summons Raj Kundra in laundering case

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) summoned businessman Raj Kundra, husband of actress Shilpa Shetty for questioning in a money laundering investigation related to the alleged illegal distribution of pornographic films. The official sources stated that Kundra is required to appear before the investigating officer on 2 December, or on another day of the week if he is unavailable on Monday.

The inquiry has also seen summons issued to several individuals, including a businessman from Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh.

Raj Kundra **PHOTO: PTI**

The ED conducted raids on Kundra's properties in Mumbai and multiple locations in Uttar Pradesh on 29 November.

Kundra asserted his full cooperation with the ongoing investigation, which has spanned four years. Shetty's legal representative clarified that actions taken against Kundra are not related to the actress, underscoring his cooperation to unveil the truth.

This money laundering case arises from multiple FIRs filed by the Mumbai Police in May 2022. Kundra, along with others, was previously arrested but later released on bail. Earlier this year, the ED attached assets worth Rs 98 crore belonging to Kundra and Shetty in a separate cryptocurrency probe, though they secured relief from the Bombay High Court.

According to investigations, the 'Hotshots' app was allegedly used to distribute obscene content, and it was revealed that small-time artists were coerced into performing semi-nude or nude scenes under false pretences. *—PTI*

WORLD AIDS DAY

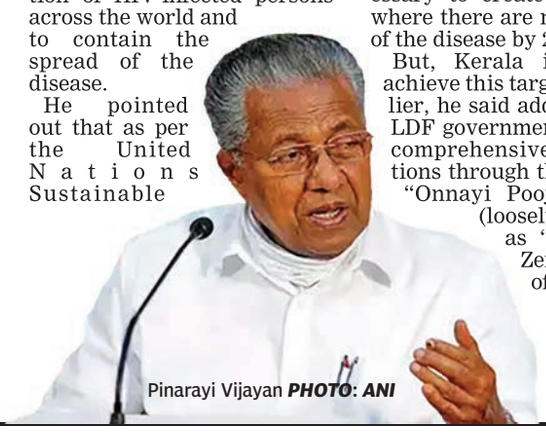
Chances of getting HIV high in Kerala: CM

T'PURAM, 1 DEC

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday said though the southern state has low density of HIV-affected persons, the odds of contracting the infection is very high there.

The disease prevention activities and awareness programmes have great significance and the state government is making various interventions to keep the disease at bay, he said in a Facebook post marking the 'World AIDS Day' today.

The CM said the day was a reminder to ensure public participation in the rehabilitation of HIV-infected persons across the world and to contain the spread of the disease.



Pinarayi Vijayan **PHOTO: ANI**

He pointed out that as per the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, it is necessary to create a situation where there are no new cases of the disease by 2030.

But, Kerala is going to achieve this target much earlier, he said adding that the LDF government is making comprehensive interventions through the campaign "Onnayi Poojayathilekk" (loosely translated as "Together to Zero") as part of this.

"We are trying to achieve the target of 95:95:95 by 2025. The first part of this intends to make the affected persons realise their condition."

The second goal is to ensure Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) treatment to 95 per cent of people, found to be infected by HIV, and the third is to control the spread of virus among them, he added.

The CM further said that though Kerala is a state where the density of HIV-affected people is low, the chances of getting the infection is very high there.

He also urged everyone to take part together in the fight against the disease. *— PTI*

Kashmir shivers as mercury drops below freezing point

SRINAGAR, 1 DEC

Dense fog blanketed parts of Kashmir on Sunday morning, as the mercury slipped below freezing point at several places in the valley following fresh snowfall a day earlier, officials said.

Motorists faced difficulties navigating due to poor visibility, the official said.

However, flight operations at Srinagar International Airport remained unaffected, according to an Airports Authority of India official.

Fresh snowfall on Saturday caused temperatures to fall below freezing point last night at several places across across the valley.

The Srinagar Airport Force station, situated at a higher altitude, was the coldest recorded place in the valley at minus 3.6 degrees Celsius.

Srinagar city logged a minimum temperature of minus 1.3 degrees, an official of the Meteorological department said.

Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, recorded a low of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius and Kupwara registered a minimum of minus 0.5 degrees Celsius.

The weather is expected to be partly cloudy with light rain or snow at isolated places in the higher reaches later in the day, the Met Department said. *— PTI*

SCHLITZ X-MAS CANDLE

A 42-meter-high candle, which is an illuminated medieval tower, shines in the historic city centre of Schlitz, Germany
PHOTO: PTI

Delhi smog: Construction workers bear the brunt

Deb"When they stop our work, we don't just lose the wages. It's the food on our plates and the little we try to save for our children's future," says Raju Singh, a mason from Bihar.

He was one of thousands of migrant and local construction workers rendered jobless following 11 November ban on constructions, prompted by the Delhi-NCR's air quality plunging to hazardous levels.

More such bans are likely to follow throughout the winter. While that is good news for the city's residents, the story is different for these construction workers.

"Even though working in the polluted air makes it hard for us to breathe, I would rather work than sit idle," Raju Singh says, describing the crushing blow the restrictions have on his finances.

These trysts with work stoppages have become an annual affair for him, and hundreds of others like him.

The Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) -- a statutory body responsible for formulating strategies to combat pollution in the region -- implements anti-pollution measures under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

Introduced in 2017 and implemented on the basis of Air Quality Index (AQI) readings, GRAP I and II (AQI 201-400) focus on advisories, dust control, and restricting diesel generators. Under GRAP-III (AQI 401-450), all non-essential construction and entry of vehicles into the city are banned. GRAP-IV (AQI above 450) halts all construction, bans non-essential trucks and BS-IV diesel vehicles, and advises work-from-home.

Dr Sarath Guttikunda, the founder and director of UrbanEmissions.Info, shared a study in which he reviewed Delhi's air pollution from 1990-2022 and found that construction-related work plays a significant part in the dust category, accounting for 10-30 per cent of the pollution.

As Delhi grapples with pollution, construction workers brace themselves for a winter of uncertainty
PHOTO: PTI

Construction activities were banned for 20 days in 2021 and 35 days in 2022. Last year, non-essential construction work was banned for 26 days, and the outlook for this year appears similarly grim.

Ajay Kumar, 34, another mason from Bihar, was also rendered jobless when the GRAP curbs were implemented.

To support his family, he started working as a helper at a vegetable shop, earning less than a third of his usual income.

An unskilled labourer, Rina Devi, 40, shares a similar story. She switched to stitching clothes for neighbours on an old sewing machine, earning a fraction of her regular wages.

Sujit, a labourer from West Bengal describes how such consecutive bans trap them in a vicious debt cycle.

"When work stops, we've to borrow money at high interest. When work resumes, most of our earnings go into paying off the debt," he says.

Sujit moved to Delhi to escape climate change-induced flooding in his village, only to run into a form of crisis caused by the activities responsible for the climate change he was escaping from -- construction and industry.

Most of Delhi-NCR's estimated 13 lakh construction workers consists of migrants from Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.

Driven by the promise of high wages, they often bring their families, setting up temporary shelters at the construction sites, and inadvertently creating conditions for another major problem -- child labour.

Now 12, Kajal has spent her entire life moving from one worksite to another, never been to school and worked in construction from the age of 10.

Drawn by the promise of high wages, her family relocated from Jharkhand, only to find themselves struggling to make ends meet each winter.

On top of the blanket construction bans, other GRAP measures significantly limit employment opportunities during winters. Skilled workers are prioritised for the few available jobs, leaving unskilled labourers like Shalini Singh, a 35-year-old mother of two, with little to no work.

She had been working at a site in Delhi's Haiderpur, trying to save every rupee for these lean months.

Her husband, who struggles with alcoholism, contributes little, leaving her solely responsible for her children's upbringing.

As on 1 October, Delhi's minimum wage for unskilled workers is Rs 18,066 a month. This is significantly higher than in nearby states and the disparity leads to even more families migrating to the national capital.

However, the higher wage means little when there is no work. When the restrictions are finally lifted, the poor air quality endangers workers' health.

Dr Sajjad Khan, who works in a mohalla clinic, said he got the most patients during winter and they came with pollution-related ailments.

He said exposure to such high pollution levels might cause long-term respiratory ailments.

Although the Delhi government has welfare schemes for construction workers, accessing these benefits is a challenge for many.

A fund managed by the Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board provides financial aid to non-migrant workers but registrations dropped from four lakh in 2023 to 81,000 now, a senior official said.

A Delhi Pollution Control Committee official said the seasonal construction bans under GRAP were crucial for protecting public health and combating the hazardous pollution levels.

Acknowledging the construction workers' hardships, he said efforts were on to improve the registration processes to ensure broader access.

But many workers PTI spoke to said registering meant filling lengthy forms that they were not educated enough to do.

As Delhi grapples with pollution, construction workers brace themselves for a winter of uncertainty. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Lawyer foresaw Bhopal tragedy but couldn't stop it

Nearly 21 months before the world's worst industrial disaster hit Bhopal, a lawyer had sent a notice to Union Carbide asking it to stop producing toxic gases at its pesticide plant here, citing grave public health risk.

However, the US multinational company summarily rejected his allegations, an act which proved costly as the monumental disaster unfolded on the intervening chilly winter night of 2 and 3 December, 1984.

The highly toxic methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the plant, killing 5,479 persons and maiming more than five lakh others.

The lawyer, Shahnawaz Khan, served a legal notice to the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) on 4 March, 1983, asking it to stop producing toxic gases that risked the lives of 50,000 persons living in the vicinity.

But, instead of putting its house in order by overhauling its safety apparatus, the UCIL on 29 April, 1983, in a strongly-worded reply to Khan, dismissed his concerns and charges as "baseless".

In the reply's last paragraph, UCIL's Bhopal unit works manager J Mukund then wrote, "We once again repudiate all the allegations made in your notice of 4th March, 1983, and should you take any legal action against us, the same shall be defended at your risk and cost."

The Bhopal-based lawyer is the nephew of freedom fighter Khan Shakir Ali Khan, a four-time MLA from here who was popularly known as "Sher-e-Bhopal".

Shahnawaz Khan told PTI that after getting the reply to his notice, he started collecting documents from police and other sources on the incidents of leak and consequent death to file a case against the UCIL.

"Before I could collect documents, the gas leaked from the Carbide factory," the 73-year-old lawyer said.

Asked about his notice, Khan said he was moved after a worker, Ashraf, of the now-defunct Union Carbide factory in Bhopal died following leak of phosgene gas from the plant on 25 December, 1981.

"On 9 January (1982), twenty-five workers were hospitalised following leak at the plant, after which the workers protested," he recalled.

Another toxic gas leak incident occurred in March 1982. After yet another leak on 5 October the same year, hundreds of residents living near the plant were hospitalised, he said.

"Moved by this, I served a legal notice to UCIL on 4 March, 1983," Khan said, showing the document and the company's reply.

Khan's notice pointed out that the factory was located within the Bhopal Municipal Corporation limits in the midst of a populated area and more than 50,000 people are residing in residential colonies adjacent to it.

"Earlier, one person lost his life in your factory. A few days ago, a serious accident took place in your factory," it stated.

With the storage and usage of toxic gases and hazardous and poisonous chemicals, residents in the nearby colonies are living in constant danger. They are living in fear, there is lurking danger of anything untoward happening taking place, the notice said.

The lives of 50,000 persons are in danger. Death looms over them all the time, it stated.

"Therefore, you are hereby, through this notice, directed to stop usage of toxic gases and hazardous and poisonous chemicals in your factory within 15 days from the date of this notice, failing which I shall be constrained to take legal action against your factory in the competent court of law and the consequences thereof Union Carbide shall be fully responsible," it added.

More than a month after Khan served the notice, UCIL's works manager Mukund in his reply said the allegations were baseless and made out of ignorance of the factory operations.

The US-based Union Carbide Corporation (UCC)-designed Union Carbide India Limited's plant was built in Bhopal in 1969, the lawyer said.

It was a formulation factory for UCC's Sevin brand of pesticides, produced by reacting methyl isocyanate and alpha naphthol, he said.

In 1975, the UCC decided to manufacture ingredients of Sevin at its Bhopal unit. Though the regulations then prohibited polluting activity in the two-km periphery from the railway station, the UCC got necessary clearance, he added. *—PTI*

The highly toxic methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the plant killed 5,479 people and maiming more than five lakh others
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Twice-yearly shot could help end AIDS. But will it get to everyone?

It's been called the closest the world has ever come to a vaccine against the AIDS virus.

The twice-yearly shot was 100 per cent effective in preventing HIV infections in a study of women, and results published Wednesday show it worked nearly as well in men.

Drugmaker Gilead said it will allow cheap, generic versions to be sold in 120 poor countries with high HIV rates - mostly in Africa, Southeast Asia and the Caribbean.

But it has excluded nearly all of Latin America, where rates are far lower but increasing, sparking concern the world is missing a critical opportunity to stop the disease.

"This is so far superior to any other prevention method we have, that it's unprecedented," said Winnie Byanyima, executive director of UNAIDS. She credited Gilead for developing the drug, but said the world's ability to stop AIDS hinges on its use in at-risk countries.

In a report issued to mark World AIDS Day on Sunday, UNAIDS said that the number of AIDS death last year — an estimated 630,000 — was at its lowest since peaking in 2004, suggesting the world is now at "a historic crossroads" and has a chance to end the epidemic.

The drug called lenacapavir is already sold under the brand name Sunlenca to treat HIV infections in the US, Canada, Europe and elsewhere. The company plans to seek authorization soon for Sunlenca to be used for HIV prevention.

While there are other ways to guard against infection, like condoms, daily pills, vaginal rings and bi-monthly shots, experts say the Gilead twice-yearly shots would be particularly useful for marginalized people often fearful of seeking care, including gay men, sex workers and young women.

"It would be a miracle for these groups because it means they just have to show up twice a year at a clinic and then they're protected," said UNAIDS' Byanyima.

Such was the case for Luis Ruvalcaba, a 32-year-old man in Guadalajara, Mexico, who participated in the latest published study.

He said he was afraid to ask for the daily prevention pills provided by the government, fearing he would be discriminated against as a gay man. Because he took part in the study, he'll continue to receive the shots for at least another year.

"In Latin American countries, there is still a lot of stigma, patients are ashamed to ask for the pills," said Dr Alma Minerva Pérez, who recruited and enrolled a dozen study volunteers at a private research center in Guadalajara.

In a report issued to mark World AIDS Day on Sunday, UNAIDS said that the number of AIDS death last year — an estimated 6,30,000 — was at its lowest since peaking in 2004
PHOTO: UNSPLASH

How widely available the shots will be in Mexico through the country's health care system isn't yet known. Health officials declined to comment on any plans to buy Sunlenca for its citizens; daily pills to prevent HIV were made freely available via the country's public health system in 2021.

"If the possibility of using generics has opened, I have faith that Mexico can join," said Pérez.

Byanyima said other countries besides Mexico that took part in the research were also excluded from the generics deal, including Brazil, Peru and Argentina. "To now deny them that drug is unconscionable." she said.

In a statement, Gilead said it has "an ongoing commitment to helping enable access to HIV prevention and treatment options where the need is the greatest." Among the 120 countries eligible for generic version are 18 mostly African countries that comprise 70% of the world's HIV burden.

The drugmaker said it is also working on establishing "fast, efficient pathways to reach all people who need or want lenacapavir for HIV prevention."

On Thursday, 15 advocacy groups in Peru, Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Guatemala and Colombia wrote to Gilead, asking for generic Sunlenca to be made available in Latin America, citing the "alarming" inequity in access to new HIV prevention tools while infection rates were rising.

While countries including Norway, France, Spain and the U.S. have paid more than $40,000 per year for Sunlenca, experts have calculated it could be produced for as little as $40 per treatment once generic production expands to cover 10 million people.

Dr Chris Beyrer, director of the Global Health Institute at Duke University, said it will be enormously useful to have Sunlenca available in the hardest-hit countries in Africa and Asia. But he said the rising HIV rates among groups including gay men and transgender populations constituted "a public health emergency" in Latin America.

Hannya Danielle Torres, a 30-year-old trans woman and artist who was in the Sunlenca study in Mexico, said she hoped the government would find a way to provide the shots. "Mexico may have some of the richest people in the world but it also has some of the most vulnerable people living in extreme poverty and violence," Torres said.

Another drugmaker, Viiv Healthcare, also left out most of Latin America when it allowed generics of its HIV prevention shot in about 90 countries. Sold as Apretude, the bi-monthly shots are about 80% to 90 per cent effective in preventing HIV. They cost about $1,500 a year in middle-income countries, beyond what most can afford to pay.

Asia Russell, executive director of the advocacy group Health Gap, said that with more than 1 million new HIV infections globally every year, established prevention methods are not enough. She urged countries like Brazil and Mexico to issue "compulsory licenses," a mechanism where countries suspend patents in a health crisis.

It's a strategy some countries embraced for previous HIV treatments, including in the late 1990s and 2000s when AIDS drugs were first discovered. More recently, Colombia issued its first-ever compulsory license for the key HIV treatment Tivicay in April, without permission from its drugmaker, Viiv.

Dr Salim Abdool Karim, an AIDS expert at South Africa's University of KwaZulu-Natal, said he had never seen a drug that appeared to be as effective as Sunlenca in preventing HIV.

"The missing piece in the puzzle now is how we get it to everyone who needs it," he said. *—PTI*

Syrian rebels advance after taking Aleppo

Syrian army deployed more soldiers in a bid to stop rebels from advancing farther

BEIRUT, 1 DEC

The Syrian military rushed in reinforcements Sunday to push back insurgents from advancing farther into the northern Hama countryside after they seized Aleppo and surrounding strategic locations in an adjacent province in a surprise offensive.

The insurgents led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham took over most of Aleppo on Saturday and claimed to have entered the city of Hama. There was no independent confirmation of their claim. Rebel commander Col. Hassan Abdulghani said separately the insurgents also took control of Sheikh Najjar, also known as the Aleppo Industrial City, northeast of the city, Aleppo's military academy and the field artillery college to the southwest.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi travels to Syrian capital Damascus later Sunday. He told reporters that Tehran will back the Syrian government and army.

The swift and surprise offensive is a huge embarrassment for Syria's President Bashar Assad and raises questions about his armed forces' preparedness. It also comes at a time when Assad's allies — Iran and groups it backs and Russia — are preoccupied with their own conflicts.

Syrian state television claimed government forces had killed nearly 1,000 insurgents over the past three days, without providing evidence or details.

Government airstrikes overnight on Idlib city, the rebel-held bastion near Hama province and 65 kilometers (40 miles) southeast of Aleppo, killed four civilians and wounded 54 others, according to the Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the White Helmets, that operates in opposition-held areas.

According to Syrian state news agency SANA and a war monitor, the army overnight pushed back insurgents in the northern countryside of Hama province.

Britain-based opposition war monitor the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that government reinforcements created a "strong defensive line" in the northern Hama countryside.

In his first public comments since the start of the offensive, released by the state news agency Saturday evening, Assad said Syria will continue to "defend its stability and territorial integrity against terrorists and their supporters." He added that Syria is able to defeat them no matter how much their attacks intensify. —*PTI*

Syrian opposition fighters stand atop a captured Syrian army tank in the town of Maarat al-Numan, southwest from Aleppo, Syria **PHOTO: PTI**

PHOTO: ANI

Toll rises to 130 as clashes continue in Pak despite truce

PESHAWAR, 1 DEC

The death toll from sectarian violence in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province surged to 130, with at least six people killed and eight injured on Sunday, as clashes in the volatile Kurram district continued for the eleventh consecutive day. The clashes between Alizai and Bagan tribes in the district started on 22 November, after an attack on a convoy of passenger vans near Parachinar in which 47 people were killed a day earlier. Several passengers who had sustained grave injuries succumbed later, raising the toll in the convoy killing to 57. Police said the situation remained tense. Previous efforts to mediate peace, including a seven-day truce brokered by provincial officials in November have failed to hold. —*PTI*

Fractured elections in Ireland tend to favour Incumbents

DUBLIN, 1 DEC

Ireland's two long-dominant centre-right parties looked likely to form a new government as results came in from a fractured national election, though with a reduced vote share and complex coalition negotiations ahead. As ballot-counting continued on Sunday, incumbent governing parties Fine Gael and Fianna Fail and left-of-centre opposition Sinn Fein were jostling to see which would win the most seats in the 174-seat Dail, the lower house of Ireland's parliament. Outgoing Prime Minister Simon Harris of Fine Gael, Fianna Fail leader Micheál Martin and Sinn Fein leader Mary Lou McDonald all won reelection to their parliamentary seats in results announced Saturday. —*PTI*

Over 40 hospitalised in Georgian protests

TBILISI, 1 DEC

A third night of protests in the Georgian capital against the government's decision to suspend negotiations to join the European Union left 44 people hospitalised after police deployed water cannons and tear gas, officials said Sunday. Tens of thousands of demonstrators gathered outside the parliament Saturday night, throwing stones and setting off fireworks. An effigy of the founder of the governing Georgian Dream party, Bidzina Ivanishvili — a shadowy billionaire who made his fortune in Russia — was burned in front of the legislature. Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze warned that "any violation of the law will be met with the full rigor of the law." —*PTI*

South Korean conductor's break delays 125 trains

SEOUL, 1 DEC

125 trains experienced delays in Seoul, South Korea on 25 November, after a train conductor stepped away for a four-minute toilet break, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded during the morning rush. The conductor, operating on the outer loop of the circular line, stopped the train at a station to dash to the restroom. Since the nearest facility was located on another floor, the operator took 4 minutes and 16 seconds to return to his cabin. This brief interruption however impacted the network, leading to trains being rescheduled. Several were delayed by 20 minutes or more, Seoul Metro confirmed. Nearly 70,000 railway, subway, and education service employees, affiliated with the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), are set to go on a general strike next month. —*Agencies*

Indian-American Kash Patel is new FBI Director

WASHINGTON DC, 1 DEC

US president-elect Donald Trump has picked Indian American Kash Patel to head the FBI, turning to a fierce ally to upend America's premier law enforcement agency and rid the government of perceived "conspirators".

It's the latest bombshell Trump has thrown at the Washington establishment and a test for how far Senate Republicans will go in confirming his nominees.

Patel "played a pivotal role in uncovering the Russia, Russia, Russia Hoax, standing as an advocate for truth, accountability, and the Constitution," Trump wrote Saturday night in a social media post.

The announcement means current FBI director Christopher Wray must either resign or be fired after Trump takes office on 20 January. Wray had previously been named by Trump and began the 10-year term — a length meant to insulate the agency from the political influence of changing administrations — in 2017, after Trump fired his predecessor, James Comey.

Patel was a fierce and vocal critic of the bureau's work as it investigated ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

Kash Patel **PHOTO: X@REALTRUMPNEWSX**

Patel first came to prominence in Trump's orbit as an outspoken critic of the FBI's investigation into potential ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

He appeared in 2022 before the Washington grand jury investigating Trump's hoarding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida after receiving immunity for his testimony.

He also testified at a Colorado court hearing related to Trump's efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election in the run-up to the violent 6 January, 2021 riot at the US Capitol.

Patel's candidacy has won support from prominent Trump supporters, including people who support the president-elect's agenda at the FBI and Justice Department. —*PTI*

Six including two children killed in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza Strip

People gather at the site where former Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was killed by Israeli airstrikes late September during a memorial ceremony in Dahiyeh Lebanon, on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

DEIR AL-BALAH, 1 DEC

Israeli airstrikes on Gaza strip overnight have resulted in the deaths of at least six individuals, including two young children, according to medical officials. The children perished in a tent where their family sought refuge in the Muwasi area, a camp currently housing hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. The children's mother and another sibling were wounded in the incident, which was reported by Nasser Hospital.

In a separate strike in Rafah, bordering Egypt, four men were confirmed dead, according to hospital records. The Israeli military stated they were unaware of strikes occurring in either location, maintaining that their operations target militants while attempting to minimise civilian casualties. However, frequent attacks across Gaza have led to the deaths of numerous women and children.

Former Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon has accused the government of engaging in ethnic cleansing in northern Gaza, where ongoing offensives against Hamas have resulted in severe humanitarian crises. Yaalon, a critic of current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, stated that there is a systematic effort to remove Arab populations from the region.

The conflict escalated after Hamas militants attacked southern Israel on 7 October, leading to significant casualties, while Israeli airstrikes have reportedly killed over 44,000 Palestinians, over half of whom are said to be women and children.

Despite a recently brokered ceasefire with Hezbollah in Lebanon, the war in Gaza continues unabated, with efforts and hopes for a lasting peace yielding little progress. —*PTI*

Putin increases Russian defence budget amid war

KYIV, 1 DEC

Russian President Vladimir Putin has approved a budget plan that will see military spending surge to unprecedented levels in 2025, as Moscow intensifies its efforts in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. According to a government announcement, approximately 32.5 per cent of the budget has been earmarked for national defence, amounting to 13.5 trillion rubles (over $145 billion), an increase from the 28.3 per cent allocated this year.

The budget proposal received the green light from lawmakers in both the State Duma and Federation Council within the last ten days, signalling a determined commitment to sustain military activities amid the protracted conflict. The war, which commenced in February 2022, is the largest military confrontation in Europe since World War II, placing considerable strain on resources from both Russia and Ukraine.

In recent developments, three individuals lost their lives when a Russian drone struck a minibus in Kherson. —*PTI*

China ramps up military ops in Taiwan

PHOTO: X@CAPTCORONADO

TAIWAN, 1 DEC

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) has said that nine Chinese military aircraft, seven naval vessels and one official ship were detected operating around the island until 6am (local time) on Sunday.

Notably, the latest Chinese military action is part of tensions between Taiwan and China, with frequent military activity by Beijing around the island.

Earlier on Saturday, Taiwanese MND said that 18 Chinese military aircraft, seven naval vessels and one official ship was detected operating around the island until 6 am (local time).

The US approved a USD385 million arms sale to Taiwan, aiming to strengthen military relations, raising concerns in China. The sale, including spare parts, is expected to begin in 2025, despite Taiwan's independence since 1949.

China's foreign ministry called the move a violation of its sovereignty, warning it would harm relations with the US and urging to halt arms sales to Taiwan.Taiwan's office of President William Lai Ching-te said the sale marks the 18th US military package since President Joe Biden took office. —*Agencies*

Taiwan Prez in Hawaii during US tour

Taiwan's president Lai Ching-te arrived Saturday in Hawaii to begin a two-day transit in the US as part of a trip to the South Pacific, his first since assuming office. The stopover in Hawaii and one planned for the territory of Guam have drawn criticism from Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its territory and objects to exchanges between the self-ruled democracy and the US. A second Trump administration is expected to test US-China relations more than Republican's first term. —*PTI*

B'desh ex-PM Zia's son acquitted in Hasina attack case

DHAKA, 1 DEC

The High Court in Dhaka has overturned the lower court's verdict, acquitting all 49 accused—including former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's son, Tarique Rahman, and former Minister Lutfozzaman Babar—linked to the 2004 grenade attack on an Awami League rally led by Sheikh Hasina. The attack, which occurred on 21 August, 2004, left 24 people dead and nearly 300 injured.

The High Court, presided over by Justices AKM Asaduzzaman and Syed Enayet Hossain, deemed the trial court's verdict "illegal," asserting the confessional statement from Mufti Abdul Hannan—leader of the banned militant group Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami—lacked evidential value due to being extracted under duress.

A Dhaka court had previously sentenced 19 individuals to death in connection with the attack, with others, including Rahman. —*PTI*

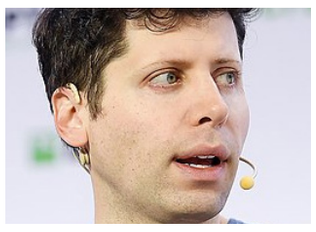
CALL FOR LEGAL STANDARDS

Canadian publishers sue OpenAI over copyright row

OTTAWA, 1 DEC

A coalition of Canadian news publishers, including The Canadian Press, Torstar, Globe and Mail, Postmedia, and CBC/Radio-Canada, has initiated legal action against OpenAI, alleging that the company unlawfully scrapes and uses news content to train its ChatGPT generative artificial intelligence system.

In a joint statement released on Friday, the outlets accused OpenAI of repeatedly breaching copyright laws by profiting from Canadian media content without permission or compensation. They asserted that such practices endanger the substantial financial investments made in journalism. The publishers called for adherence to legal standards, emphasising the necessity for fair terms regarding the use of intellectual property. OpenAI responded by asserting that its models are trained on publicly available data and operate within the confines of fair use and international copyright principles. The company highlighted its collaboration with news publishers, offering ways to opt-out of content use if desired.



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

This lawsuit marks the first of its kind in Canada, although multiple similar cases are underway in the United States, including one from The New York Times. While some news organisations have opted to partner with OpenAI, securing deals for the use of content, the situation in Canada remains complex. —*PTI*

UN court to hear landmark climate case on rising seas

HAGUE, 1 DEC

The top United Nations court will take up the largest case in its history on Monday, when it opens two weeks of hearings into what countries worldwide are legally required to do to combat climate change and help vulnerable nations fight its devastating impact.

After years of lobbying by island nations who fear they could simply disappear under rising sea waters, the UN General Assembly asked the International Court of Justice last year for an opinion on "the obligations of States in respect of climate change."

"We want the court to confirm that the conduct that has wrecked the climate is unlawful," Margaretha Wewerinke-Singh, who is leading the legal team for the Pacific island nation of Vanuatu, told The Associated Press.

Sea levels have risen by 4.3 cm globally from 2023, with parts of the Pacific still rising. The world has also warmed by 1.3 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times due to fossil fuel burning. Vanuatu, one of a group of small states, is pushing for international legal intervention, claiming to live on the front lines of climate change impact and witness the destruction of their lands, livelihoods, culture, and human rights. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) will hear from 99 countries and over a dozen intergovernmental organisations over two weeks, marking the largest lineup in the institution's nearly 80-year history. —*PTI*

FIRST IN THE WORLD

Belgium grants maternity leave to sex workers

BRUSSELS, 1 DEC

Belgium passed the breakthrough law granting the maternity leaves for sex workers, making it the first country in the world to treat sex work like any other profession. The new law entitles sex workers to employment benefits such as official contracts, health insurance, pensions, maternity leave, and sick days.

This development follows Belgium's decriminalisation of sex work in 2022 but goes further by establishing employment rights and protections. The move has been hailed as a global milestone by human rights organizations. Erin Kilbride, a researcher at Human Rights Watch, described the legislation as "radical" and "the best step we have seen anywhere in the world so far."

PHOTO: PIXABAY

It was inspired by protests in 2022 that highlighted the lack of state support for sex workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Sophie, a sex worker and mother of five, expressed hope for better conditions, saying, "It's an opportunity for us to exist as people." The law also legitimises aspects of the sex trade that remain controversial, such as regulated pimps. Strict oversight aims to ensure compliance with safety standards. —*Agencies*

SEX WORKERS WILL BE ENTITLED TO:

- Employment contracts with social benefits.
- Protections against workplace threats.
- Right to refuse clients without penalty.
- Alarm systems linked to immediate aid.
- Flexible resignation rights.
- People with serious convictions are barred from hiring.

GDP to grow at 6.8% in 2024–25: CRISIL Report

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

With India logging disappointing growth in the July–September quarter, rating agency CRISIL is expecting the GDP growth to slow to 6.8 per cent in financial year 2024–25. Last year, India grew at 8.2 per cent. According to CRISIL, the growth is weighed down by high interest rates and low fiscal impulse. "Risks are tilted toward the downside given the lacklustre second quarter growth number," said the CRISIL report. However, some high-frequency indicators from October, such as automobile sales and export growth, are showing encouraging signs of a revival in the third quarter, indicating the slowdown in the second quarter could be transitory. The Indian economy grew by 5.4 per cent in real terms in the July–September quarter of 2024–25. The quarterly growth was lower than RBI's forecast of 7 per cent.—*ANI*

Wipro revenue up 10%, profit jumps 35%

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Azim Hasham Premji-led Wipro Enterprises has said its consolidated revenue from operations increased 9.8 per cent to Rs 16,902 crore in the financial year ended March 2024 while its profit jumped 35 per cent to Rs 1,903.1 crore. According to an RoC (Registrar of Companies) filing, its total income, including other income, stood at Rs 17,761.3 crore in FY24, up 11.2 per cent from FY23 figure. Wipro Enterprises had reported a revenue from operations of Rs 15,387.8 crore and a profit of Rs 1,410.1 crore a year before in FY23, revealed financial data accessed through business intelligence platform Tofler As of March 31, 2024, Azim H Premji held 77.65 per cent stake in the company and the rest 21.84 per cent was owned by the Azim Premji Trust. Wipro Enterprises is primarily engaged in the business of consumer care and home care products, food business, hydraulics, aerospace components, domestic and institutional lighting, commercial solutions, additive manufacturing, and industrial automation.—*PTI*

Toyota Kirloskar Motor sales up 44%

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) on Sunday said its total sales rose 44 per cent year-on-year to 25,586 units in November 2024. The automaker sold 17,818 units in November last year. "Our diverse portfolio, spanning from hatchbacks to SUVs, continues to offer tailored mobility solutions that resonate with varying lifestyles," TKM Vice President, Sales-Service-Used Car Business Sabari Manohar said in a statement. The year 2024 has exceeded the company's expectations, he said. "We are gearing up to close it on a strong note, with a continued focus on redefining customer experience to effectively meet evolving market demands," he added. —*PTI*

Hyundai Motor sales decline by 7% in November

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

3 Hyundai Motor India on Sunday said its total sales declined seven per cent year-on-year to 61,252 units in November 2024. The automaker had dispatched 65,801 units to its dealers in the same month last year, the automaker said in a statement. Domestic sales declined two per cent year on year to 48,246 units last month as against 49,451 units in the year-ago period. Exports declined 20 per cent year on year to 13,006 units last month. The company's push towards fortifying SUV supremacy continued in November with SUVs contributing 68.8 per cent of total domestic sales, Hyundai Motor India Wholetime Director and Chief Operating Officer Tarun Garg said. —*PTI*

ATF price hiked 1.45%, commercial LPG up ₹16.5

Prices of domestic LPG, petrol, and diesel remain frozen

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The price of jet fuel, or aviation turbine fuel (ATF), was hiked on Sunday by 1.45 per cent and rates of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants increased by Rs 16.5 per 19-kg cylinder in the monthly revision done in line with international oil price trends.

The ATF price was increased by Rs 1,318.12 per kilolitre to Rs 91,856.84 per kilolitre in the national capital, said state-owned fuel retailers.

This is the second straight monthly increase in jet fuel prices. Rates were increased by Rs 2,941.5 per kilolitre (3.3 per cent) on 1 November. That hike came after two rounds of reduction which had taken the rates to their lowest level this year. The ATF price on 1 October was cut by 6.3 per cent (Rs 5,883 per kilolitre) and by Rs 4,495.5 per kilolitre, or 4.58 per cent on 1 September.

The ATF price in Mumbai was increased to Rs 85,861.02 per kilolitre on Sunday from Rs 84,642.91 previously.

Oil firms also increased the price of commercial LPG by Rs 16.5 to Rs 1818.50 per 19-kg cylinder. This is the fifth straight monthly hike in commercial LPG price. Rates were hiked by Rs 62 per 19-kg cylinder at the last revision on 1 November.

LPG rates were hiked by Rs 62 per 19-kg cylinder at the last revision on 1 November PHOTO: PTI

In five price increases, commercial LPG rates have hiked by Rs 172.5 per 19-kg cylinder. Rates are now at their highest level in one year. Commercial LPG now costs Rs 1771 per 19-kg cylinder in Mumbai, Rs 1,927 in Kolkata and Rs 1,980 in Chennai.

The rate of cooking gas used in domestic households, however, remained unchanged at Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder.

- Oil firms also increased the price of commercial LPG by Rs 16.5 to Rs 1818.50 per 19-kg cylinder

Prices of petrol and diesel continue to remain frozen. Rates had been cut by Rs 2 per litre in mid-March ahead of the general elections. Petrol costs Rs 94.72 a litre in Delhi while diesel is priced at Rs 87.62.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd revise prices of ATF and cooking gas on the first of every month based on the average price of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate. —*PTI*

STRONG DOLLAR

Markets lost ₹21,612 crore FPI in November

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

Foreign investors pulled out Rs 21,612 crore from the Indian equity market in November, mainly due to the rising US bond yields, strengthening dollar and expectation of a slowdown in the domestic economy.

While the sell-off continues, the quantum of net outflow significantly reduced compared to October, when FPIs recorded a massive withdrawal of Rs 94,017 crore.

With the latest pull out, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have experienced total net outflow of Rs 15,019 crore in 2024 so far.

Looking ahead, the flow of foreign investments into Indian equity markets will hinge on several key factors. These include the policies implemented under Donald Trump's presidency, the prevailing inflation and interest rate environment and the evolving geopolitical landscape, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Additionally, the third-quarter earnings performance of Indian companies and the country's progress on the economic growth front will play a crucial role in shaping investor sentiment and influencing foreign inflows, he added.

According to the data, FPIs recorded a net outflow of Rs 21,612 crore in November. This came following a net withdrawal of Rs 94,017 crore in October, which was the worst monthly outflow.

However, in September, foreign investors made a nine-month high investment of Rs 57,724 crore. Market analysts attributed the latest outflow to the rising US bond yields, strengthening dollar and expectation of a slowdown in the domestic economy. —*PTI*

DROP BY $1.31B

Forex reserves slump for 8th consecutive week

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves slumped for an eighth consecutive week to hit a multi-month low of USD 6,56,582billion in the week that ended on 22 November, revealed data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The forex reserves dropped by about USD 1.310B in the reporting week. The reserves have been falling ever since it touched all-time high of USD 704.89B in September.

The reserves have been declining likely because of the RBI intervention aimed at preventing a sharp depreciation of the Rupee. A substantial foreign exchange reserve buffer helps shield domestic economic activity from global shocks.

The latest RBI data showed that India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of forex reserves, stood at USD 566.791B. Gold reserves currently amount to USD 67.573B, according to RBI data. Estimates suggest the foreign exchange reserves are now sufficient to cover approximately one year of projected imports. In 2023, India added around USD 58B to its foreign exchange reserves, contrasting with a cumulative decline of USD 71B in 2022.

The reserves have been falling ever since it touched all-time high of USD 704.89B in September PHOTO: X

Foreign exchange reserves, or FX reserves, are assets held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority, primarily in reserve currencies such as the US Dollar, with smaller portions in the Euro, Japanese Yen and Pound Sterling.

The RBI closely monitors foreign exchange markets, intervening only to maintain orderly market conditions and curb excessive volatility in the Rupee exchange rate, without adhering to any fixed target level or range. —*ANI*

Mcap of nine firms surges ₹2.29L cr

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms surged Rs 2,29,589.86 crore last week, with Life Insurance Corporation of India emerging as the biggest gainer, in tandem with a rally in benchmark indices.

Last week, BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 685.68 points or 0.86 per cent and NSE Nifty climbed 223.85 points or 0.93 per cent. The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) jumped Rs 60,656.72 crore to Rs 6,23,202.02 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. HDFC Bank added Rs 39,513.97 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 13,73,932.11 crore. The market valuation of Reliance Industries surged Rs 35,860.79 crore to Rs 17,48,991.54 crore and that of Bharti Airtel soared Rs 32,657.06 crore to Rs 9,26,725.90 crore. State Bank of India's market capitalisation (mcap) climbed Rs 20,482 crore to Rs 7,48,775.62 crore and that of ICICI Bank rallied Rs 15,858.02 crore to Rs 9,17,724.24 crore.

Mcap of Infosys dropped by Rs 18,477.5 crore PHOTO: X

- The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) jumped Rs 60,656.72 crore to Rs 6,23,202.02 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. HDFC Bank added Rs 39,513.97 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 13,73,932.11 crore

Hindustan Unilever's valuation went up by Rs 11,947.67 crore to Rs 5,86,516.72 crore and that of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) climbed Rs 10,058.28 crore to Rs 15,46,207.79 crore.The mcap of ITC went up by Rs 2,555.35 crore to Rs 5,96,828.28 crore.

However, the Mcap of Infosys declined by Rs 18,477.5 crore to Rs 7,71,674.33 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, LIC, ITC and Hindustan Unilever. —*PTI*

Petrol and diesel sales have been tepid during the monsoon months as rains reduced vehicular movement and demand for the agri sector PHOTO: PTI

Petrol, diesel sales rebound on festival demand

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

India's petrol and diesel consumption soared in November as the festive season reversed a fall in demand witnessed in previous months, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed on Friday.

While petrol sales had shown a year-on-year increase, diesel has been a laggard since monsoon and November was the first month that saw positive growth in consumption.

Petrol sales of three state-owned firms, which control 90 per cent of the fuel market, soared 8.3 per cent to 3.1 million tonnes in November compared to 2.86 million tonnes of consumption in the same month last year.

Diesel demand was up 5.9 per cent to 7.2 million tonnes.

Petrol and diesel sales have been tepid during the monsoon months as rains reduced vehicular movement and demand for the agriculture sector. Petrol demand however soared once rains eased but diesel consumption lagged year-on-year.

Month-on-month petrol sales were up 4.7 per cent when compared to 2.96 million tonnes of consumption in October. Diesel demand was almost 11 per cent more than 6.5 million tonnes of consumption in October.

Diesel is India's most consumed fuel, accounting for almost 40 per cent of all petroleum product consumption. The transport sector accounts for 70 per cent of all diesel sales in the country. It is also the predominant fuel used in agriculture sectors, including in harvesters and tractors.

Consumption of petrol during November was 16.5 per cent more than in November 2022, and 33.5 per cent more than in Covid-marred November 2020.

Diesel demand was 1.8 per cent lower than November 2022, but 8.5 per cent compared to November 2020. —*PTI*

Global trends, GDP to drive mkt this week

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Trading sentiment in the equity market this week will be guided by global trends, foreign fund movement, macroeconomic data announcements and RBI's interest rate decision, analysts said.

The monthly auto sales data announcement would also be tracked by investors this week.

"Looking ahead, markets are likely to react to the disappointing GDP growth of 5.4 pc on Monday. The upcoming RBI policy will be crucial, with both the interest rate decision and commentary being key focus areas," said Santosh Meena, head of research at Swastika Investmart Ltd.

"On the global front, geopolitical tensions, particularly the Russia–Ukraine situation, remains a concern. Important macroeconomic data such as manufacturing PMI from India, the US and China, along with US jobs data and Fed Chair Jerome Powell's speech, will also influence market sentiment," Meena said.

The monthly auto sales data announcement would also be tracked by investors this week PHOTO: X

India's economic growth slowed to near two-year low of 5.4 per cent in the July–September quarter due to poor performance of manufacturing and mining sectors as well as weak consumption, data showed on Friday. —*PTI*

INDIA, ITALY CAN FORM TRADE LINK: URSO

MUMBAI, 1 DEC

Italy can be the "landing base" for India to access the European market while India can act as the landing base for Italy, said Adolfo Urso, Italian minister for business and Made in Italy, on Saturday.

"India can be for Europe the landing base in Asia in the great south-eastern Asian basin, and Italy can be for India the landing base in Europe, for the most significant and richest world market," he said. This line of communication passes through the Arabian peninsula, which has a very important place in the economic realm, the Italian minister said. —*PTI*

INTERSTATE SALE CURBS

WB potato traders to go on strike tomorrow

KOLKATA, 1 DEC

West Bengal potato traders have threatened to go on strike on Tuesday unless the state government lift restrictions on selling to other states. The state recently re-imposed curbs on selling potatoes to neighbouring states in an effort to control the prices in the local markets. Potatoes are retailing at Rs 35–40 per kg in the local markets.

Following the decision of the state government, police have intensified surveillance at inter-state borders to prevent the transportation of potatoes out of the state. This has led to several trucks being stranded at border crossings.

"We will go on strike from Tuesday if the government does not lift the restrictions," said Progressive Potato Traders' Association secretary Lalu Mukherjee. He criticised the government's decision, stating, "Such abrupt measures disrupt our business and cause huge losses as we fail to fulfil commitments."

Potatoes are retailing at Rs 35–40 per kg in the local market PHOTO: X

Traders and cold storage associations blamed the state government for failing to control prices in the local markets, attributing it to profiteering by intermediaries. "Despite the wholesale price of potatoes in Kolkata being Rs 27 per kg, how is it retailing at Rs 35–40?" a trader questioned.

Neighbouring states such as Odisha and Jharkhand rely heavily on West Bengal for their potato supply. Odisha's Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra on Saturday accused the Mamata Banerjee government of playing politics over the supply of potatoes. "West Bengal also depends on other states for fish and other items. If desired, Odisha can also stop the goods vehicles at its border. But, we are not going to do so," he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mohammed Shami sets up Bengal's win in SMA Trophy

RAJKOT, 1 DEC

India's star pacer Mohammed Shami set up Bengal's comfortable win against Meghalaya with a measly spell in their Group A contest in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy here on Sunday.Elsewhere, Naman Dhir returned excellent figures of 5/19 to fashion Punjab's narrow seven-run win against Hyderabad in Group A, while Jharkhand recorded a thrilling one-wicket victory against Haryana in which Patel (2/16) and Yuzvendra Chahal (1/13) shone with the ball.Shami continued to take giant strides in his comeback trail as he produced a sharp spell of 4-0-16-0 to help Bengal restrict Meghalaya to a modest 127 for six.Brief scores: Saurashtra 266/6 in 20 overs (Harvik Desai 76, Ruchit Ahir 57, Jay Gohil 53; Atit Sheth 3/44) beat Baroda 188/8 in 20 overs (Shashwat Rawat 38, Vishnu Solanki 34; Ankur Panwar 3/35).—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Ryggs Johnston wins Australian Open for first title

MELBOURNE, 1 DEC

Unheralded American Ryggs Johnston has won his first professional title by claiming the Australian Open by three strokes, while South Korea's Jiyai Shin claimed her second Women's Australian Open which was played concurrently at two courses on the famed Melbourne sand belt. Johnston shot a 68 on Sunday to finish at 18-under 269 and three clear of Australian Curtis Luck (68), who had briefly taken the lead on the final stretch at Kingston Heath. The 24-year-old Montana native, with a world ranking of 953rd, is the first American to win the Stonehaven Cup since PGA Tour star Jordan Spieth won it for a second time in 2016.Marc Leishman (69), who plays on the LIV Tour, and fellow Australian Jasper Stubbs (70) were tied for the third at 14-under 273.—*PTI*

SMA T20: Surya to join Mumbai squad from Andhra game

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

India's T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav will be back in action for Mumbai's next Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy game against Andhra on Tuesday, December 3 after taking a short two-week break to attend a family function. Just like he has done on some earlier occasions, Surya might not lead the side with Shreyas Iyer in charge till now and will be one of the regular players. Surya, who led India to an emphatic 3-1 series win over South Africa will link up with the Mumbai squad in Hyderabad on Monday and is expected to turn up for the next game against Andhra.—*PTI*

Hardik to lead UP Rudras in upcoming HIL

LUCKNOW, 1 DEC

Star India midfielder Hardik Singh was on Sunday named captain of the UP Rudras for the upcoming season of Hockey India League (HIL). The Lucknow franchise, owned by Yadu Sports, has assembled a strong squad that also features young sensation Priyobarta Talem, and Gurjot Singh along with some of the stalwarts of India and international hockey, including Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Simranjeet Singh, Lars Balk, and Kane Russel.UP Rudras head coach Paul Van Ass added: "Hardik was our first pick at the auctions.—*PTI*

Jay Shah takes over as new ICC Chairman

DUBAI, 1 DEC

Indian cricket administrator Jay Shah on Sunday took charge as the chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) with an immediate goal of ending the impasse surrounding the Champions Trophy and a broader vision of making cricket a commercially viable Olympic sport. The 36-year-old Shah, who headlined the BCCI as its secretary for the last five years, is the fifth Indian and the youngest ever to head the global cricket body. He was the unanimous choice of the ICC's Board of Directors and replaced New Zealand attorney Greg Barclay, who didn't wish to continue for a third consecutive term.

Before Shah, businessman late Jagmohan Dalmiya, politician Sharad Pawar, lawyer Shashank Manohar, and industrialist N Srinivasan all headed the world cricket body. Shah, the son of India's Home Minister Amit Shah, will have his task cut out as the ICC looks to find an acceptable solution to implement the 'Hybrid Model' for the Champions Trophy originally scheduled in Pakistan. As of now, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to accept the 'Hybrid Model' under which India plays their matches in Dubai. But the PCB also wants the same courtesy to be accorded to Pakistan in all four ICC tournaments till 2031, which will be co-hosted or singularly hosted by the Indian Cricket Board. Now, as the head of the global body and with less than 100 days left for the tournament to begin, Shah will have to coordinate with both the PCB and his former colleagues at the BCCI for an "acceptable solution" to organize a hassle-free tournament.

> **Eye on ending Champion Trophy impasse**
>
> - Jay Shah, Indian cricket administrator

India has already refused to travel to Pakistan as it hasn't received clearance from its government. Shah didn't make any comment on the Champions Trophy while outlining his priorities for his term which included leveraging the sport's inclusion in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games as an opportunity and further accelerate the growth of the women's game.

"Cricket holds immense potential globally, and I look forward to working closely with the ICC team and Member countries to seize these opportunities and take the sport to new heights."

Shah acknowledged Barclay's contributions to the ICC over the last four years. "I would also like to thank Greg Barclay for his leadership in the role for the past four years and the milestones achieved during that period," he said.

India's representation at ICC

While it is still not clear who will be the next BCCI secretary, India could be represented at the ICC Board by either current president Roger Binny or vice-president Rajiv Shukla.

Roger Binny PHOTO: PTI

In case Binny becomes the director from India, Shukla could be the alternate director. If Shukla is elevated as India's representative, the co-representative could be Arun Dhumal, who is among the two to three names being discussed for the next secretary's post, treasurer Ashish Shelar, and joint secretary Devajit Lon Saikia being the others. —*PTI*

PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen clinch singles titles

SMI Int'l: Treesa-Gayatri pair shines in doubles

LUCKNOW, 1 DEC

Top seeds P V Sindhu and Lakshya Sen produced commanding performances to claim the women's and men's singles titles, respectively, at the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Sunday.

Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, ended her long title drought by outplaying China's world number 119 Wu Luo Yu 21-14, 21-16 to lift the trophy for the third time, having previously triumphed in 2017 and 2022.

PV Sinhdu at the podium of the Syed Modi International 2024 PHOTO: SCREENGRAB DD SPORTS

In the men's singles final, Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships bronze medallist, was at his dominant best as he demolished Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh 21-6, 21-7 in the title clash, displaying complete command over the match.

Sindhu's victory marks her return to the top of the podium after over two years, with her last title win being at the Singapore Open in July 2022. The world number 18 also reached the finals of the Malaysia Masters Super 500 earlier this year.

Lakshya's win comes as a balm after a disappointing loss in the bronze medal playoff at the Paris Olympics. The victory will undoubtedly boost his confidence ahead of the new season.

Indian badminton had more to celebrate on the day as the women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand clinched their maiden Super 300 title with a convincing 21-18, 21-11 win over China's Bao Li Jing and Li Qian. The result made Treesa and Gayatri the first Indian women's doubles team to win the title at this tournament. The Commonwealth Games bronze medallists, who had finished runners-up in 2022, went one step further this year with their solid performance. In the men's doubles final, Pruthvi Krishnamurthy Roy and Sai Pratheek K put up a valiant fight before going down 14-21, 21-19, 17-21 to China's Huang Di and Liu Yang in a marathon 71-minute clash. Meanwhile, in the mixed doubles final, fifth seeds Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila started strong but couldn't sustain their momentum, losing 21-18, 14-21, 8-21 to Thailand's sixth-seeded pair Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran. —*PTI*

Treesa-Gayatri pair wins women's doubles title PHOTO: PTI

WOMEN'S JUNIOR ASIA CUP 2024

Indian women's Hockey team PHOTO: PTI

Jyoti Singh to lead 20-member Indian Hockey team

NEW DELHI, 1 DEC

Hockey India on Sunday named a strong 20-member squad, led by Jyoti Singh, for the upcoming women's Junior Asia Cup, which will be held in Muscat, Oman, from 7 to 15 December.

As the defending champions, India entered the tournament with high hopes after securing their maiden title last year, defeating South Korea 2-1.

This tournament qualifies for the FIH Hockey Junior World Cup 2025. The host nation for the event is yet to be determined.

The competition will feature 10 teams divided into two pools. India is placed in Pool A alongside China, Malaysia, Thailand, and Bangladesh, while Pool B consists of South Korea, Japan, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong China, and Sri Lanka.

Sakshi Rana has been named the vice-captain.

Nidhi and Aditi Maheshwari will provide a strong presence in the goal, while Manisha, Jyoti Singh, Lalthantluangi, Pooja Sahoo, and Mamata Oram will marshall the defense.

The midfield features a talented lineup comprising Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Sunelita Toppo, Ishika, Rajni Kerketta, Sakshi Rana, and Khaidem Shileima Chanu. India will rely on Deepika, Beauty Dungdung, Kanika Siwach, Mumtaz Khan, and Lalrinpuii to lead the attack. Binima Dhan and Himanshi Sharad Gawande have been named as reserve players.

Deepika, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Sunelita Toppo, Mumtaz Khan, and Beauty Dungdung have represented the Indian women's senior national team and will bring valuable experience. —*PTI*

World Chess Championship: Gukesh holds Liren with black pieces

SINGAPORE, 1 DEC

Indian challenger D Gukesh held defending champion Ding Liren of China to a draw with black pieces in an intense sixth game of the World Chess Championship to remain level on points here Sunday. The third draw in a row left both players on an identical tally of 3 points apiece, still shy of 4.5 more points in order to win the championship. The two players signed peace after 46 moves. It was the fourth draw of the match. It remains to be seen what strategy the players would opt for as the match moves towards the halfway mark. The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game while the 18-year-old Gukesh had emerged victorious in the third game. The second, fourth, and fifth games had ended in draws. With eight games still remaining in the 14-round match, the battle will resume after the second rest day on Monday, and it does seem like Liren is gaining in confidence with each passing game even though he was written off by most of the top players in the world. Playing with white pieces, Liren for once solved all his opening problems without much ado as he went for the super-solid London system with his third white in the match and blitzed out the first 20 moves, conceding a mere seven minutes on the clock.

In the process though, all the Knights and Bishops had changed hands, leading to a Queen and Rook endgame with equal pawns. Gukesh used up a little over 50 minutes in the first part of the game, giving Liren a 45-minute lead on the clock for the first time in the match.—*PTI*

India's D Gukesh and China's Ding Liren during the sixth game of the World Chess Championship PHOTO: PTI

PRIME MINISTER'S XI

Gill gets quality match time, India win by 6 wickets

CANBERRA, 1 DEC

Shubman Gill dispelled all doubts about his thumb injury with a stylish fifty even as skipper Rohit Sharma kept cards close to his chest by coming in at No. 4 in India's curtailed pink-ball warm-up game against Prime Minister's XI here on Sunday. The visitors won the match by six wickets. It, however, remains to be seen if the Indian captain will come out to open in the second Test against Australia, starting Friday in Adelaide.

It was a 46-overs-a-side affair, which India won by chasing down an easy target of 241 in 42.5 overs, but they carried on batting till the end of the final over. For Australia, Test hopeful Sam Konstas' 107 off 97 balls went in vain.

The Indian team management was tactical in its choices as Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah decided to face each other at the nets rather than providing data to the Aussie think-tank.

Interestingly, Ravichandran Ashwin, who didn't play the Perth Test, was seen at the nets, mostly bowling to Kohli. Ashwin had a four-wicket haul in the last Pink-ball Test in Adelaide in 2020-21.

Shubman Gill scored 50 runs off 62 balls in warm-up match against Australia Prime Minister's XI. PHOTO: PTI

Brief Scores: Australia PM XI 240 in 43.2 over (Sam Konstas 107, Hanno Jacobs 61, Jack Clayton 40, Harshit Rana 4/44, Akash Deep 2/58). India 257 for 5 in 46 overs (Shubman Gill retd 50 no, KL Rahul retd 27 no, Yashasvi Jaiswal 45, Nitish Kumar 42, Ravindra Jadeja 27, Washington Sundar 42 no). —*PTI*

QATAR GRAND PRIX

Russell on pole as Max given grid penalty

PARIS, 1 DEC

Newly-crowned four-time world champion Max Verstappen has been stripped of pole position at the Qatar Grand Prix for impeding Mercedes driver George Russell in qualifying on Saturday.

Red Bull's Verstappen was given a one-place grid penalty for blocking Russell with the British driver starting on the pole instead of the Dutchman. Hours after Verstappen claimed his first pole position for five months a one-place penalty was imposed for driving unnecessarily slowly, a maneuver that pushed Russell into the gravel. The Red Bull driver clocked the fastest lap in one minute and 20.520 seconds and Russell was originally second for Mercedes just 0.055 seconds adrift.

"Super-dangerous by Verstappen," said the Mercedes driver, whose thoughts prompted the stewards to investigate.

"I ended up going through the gravel and all over the floor it felt like it was scraping," said Russell.

McLaren's Lando Norris remains third while sprint-race winner Oscar Piastri of McLaren is fourth with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc on the third row along with Lewis Hamilton in sixth for Sunday's Grand Prix.

Norris admitted his disappointment at missing out on a front-row start."It's not what we hoped for, but it was the maximum we could do. My lap was pretty good, but not quick enough." —*PTI*

Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (right) receives the pole position trophy from Qatar's track and field athlete Mutaz Essa Barshim PHOTO: X / @REDBULL

Las Palmas claim surprise 2-1 victory at La Liga

LONDON, 1 DEC

Las Palmas claimed a surprise 2-1 victory at La Liga leaders Barcelona on Saturday, spoiling the hosts' 125th anniversary celebrations. Atletico Madrid climbed provisionally second, within two points of Hansi Flick's side with a 5-0 rout of Real Valladolid later on. Sandro Ramirez sent Las Palmas ahead early in the second half and although Raphinha hammered home an equalizer, Fabio Silva struck to claim three points and take his team up to 14th.

Barcelona still lead champions Real Madrid by four points but third-place Los Blancos, who host Getafe on Sunday, have played two fewer games than the Catalans and Atletico.

PHOTO: X

Barca have now gone three league games without a victory, after a run of 11 wins in 12 prior in the top flight.

"We had a bad game, we have to look at what we're doing badly to try and improve and win games," Raphinha told Movistar.

"I don't care about my goal, I care about winning, we didn't win and I'm not satisfied with the game." —*AP*